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AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

BY
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BELFAST.

AUTHOR OF "THE SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT."

Second Edition.

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MDCCCLXVI.

TO
The Congregation of Fisherwick Place,
THIS VOLUME
IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED
BY THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR,
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IN the beginning of this year, it was my privilege to publish a volume on "The Scripture Testimony to the Holy Spirit," and I addressed it to my brethren in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, because I wished to give expression to the happiness which I have long enjoyed in their fellowship, and because I desired thus to commend the subject of the Holy Spirit to a large place in their public ministrations. The present volume I have dedicated to the members of my congregation, for reasons which have constrained me to feel I owe this expression of my respect, gratitude, and love to them.

God has graciously spared me, in the ministry of His Son, for a period of nearly forty-six years, and of these, thirty-seven have been spent in Fisherwick Place. With the exception of three months, under a virulent attack of typhus fever, my ministry was never interrupted in Belfast. Never robust, I was yet never incapacitated for either my Sabbath or week-day services. I can scarcely call to remembrance a single occasion on which I was unable to appear in my expected place. Often have I wondered at this gracious providence, especially when I have seen many of my brethren, far more able and excellent than myself, laid aside. Better than an uninterrupted ministry, mine has been singularly peaceful, harmonious, and at least outwardly, prosperous.

There has never been a congregational dispute or misunderstanding of any kind. Days, and weeks, and months, and years, have flowed on as a placid river, bearing us along without disturbance or agitation. Of such a ministry, I desire, while I have the capacity graciously prolonged to me, to leave some tangible and express memorial. By this I design, first of all, to acknowledge the goodness and grace of God toward me and my flock, and I write upon it the prophet's motto, "Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us." At the same time, I wish to record my deep sense of the forbearance, kindness, and brotherly love, which the Divine Spirit has graciously made to prevail among us, as well in the intercourse of the members one with another, as of the pastor and the people. Surely, such mercies ought not to remain unacknowledged to the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

In these remarks, the reason will be abundantly manifest why I have made this memorial of my ministry, to consist of an exposition of the first Epistle of John. Its subject is brotherly love. And it is treated by him, not merely in all its length and breadth, and all the various relations in which it ought to be exercised, but it is throughout presented in the light of a principal evidence of the believer's sonship. Not merely is the subject of brotherly love fully discussed, but we are taught to examine ourselves by it, whether we are the people of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." These are the sayings and sentiments of the inspired apostle. This is the light in which

he commends his great subject. It is thus I desire to engage your attention with it. I would have you not merely to understand what brotherly love is, but to examine whether you possess it, and live in the exercise of it, and have this evidence of your true discipleship. Can you conclude that you are the children of God, seeing you are constrained by the love He bears to you to love all them that are members of His family? This practical and personal application of the truth that is taught is a distinguishing feature of the First Epistle of John. It is, indeed, a feature of all the Scriptures, manifesting their sincerity, and truth, and earnestness. It is very pointed in the writings of the Apostle Paul, who is ever illustrating his subject by his own personal history. But in John it is carried to perfection, especially in this epistle. He seems to take his reader by the hand, and to discuss with him, not the truth merely, but his personal interest in it; not only the subject of brotherly love, but the reader's possession of it, and the evidence thus furnished to him, and enjoyed by him, that he is himself a child of God. Thus, it is, beloved brethren, I present this subject to your attention, and ask your acceptance of my volume as a token of my love, and a memorial of my ministry. Undesignedly, the exposition is completed in fifty-two Lectures, so that by the reading of one every Sabbath, the Volume will furnish a lesson for every Sabbath in the year.

So far as others are concerned, beyond the bounds of my ministry, I am not without a deep interest in their relation to this subject. I am thankful to say a beloved relative has proposed to place a copy of my book in the hands of all the ministers of our Assembly, and that it may be hoped it shall in this way reach many who would otherwise be beyond our influence. I am not afraid that my brethren will consider me guilty of presumption in thus offering my thoughts for their consideration. I am older than the most of them, and

they will bear with me. I know they will not lightly regard the experience of a lengthened ministry. They will think on a subject that has engaged the patient and persevering attention of one who must soon be separated from them. And I am the more earnest to ask this favour from them, because this Epistle of John has not received the same amount of consideration that has been given to some other portions of the divine word. I am not aware of any lengthened exposition of it. I could find little human help in the study of it. But I sought only to know its meaning, and as I was led to see it, to write it in the plainest and simplest words I could command. There is no learned criticism, nor scholarly disquisition ; but I count it better to say, "I think that I have the Spirit of God" and "the mind of Christ."

4th November, 1865.

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FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

LECTURE I.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.”—1 JOHN i. 1-3.

IT has long been my desire to study and expound the first epistle of John. A seasonable time for doing so seems to me now to have come in the providence of God. And without dwelling on the reasons of this conclusion, I proceed at once to engage in this important exercise, looking for the blessing of God which alone can render it effectual.

A prominent design of the whole epistle seems to be expressed by the author in the fifth chapter at the thirteenth verse, where he says, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” It is addressed to believers,

and intended to aid them in a work of self-examination, that they may be assured of their interest in Christ, and confirmed in their most holy faith.

In the discussion of this subject many topics are introduced. The whole range of evangelical truth is traversed by the apostle. The one great practical object, however, is never out of sight. And of this peculiarity we shall endeavour to be mindful in the whole exposition, should it please God to enable us to prosecute and complete it.

In the verses now to be considered, the apostle may be understood as announcing his grand subject—the mediatorial person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is assumed that it is to Him he refers. Without any introduction he proclaims Him at once in His twofold nature of deity and humanity. He tells his readers what the Saviour is, that they may thereby be the better prepared to examine their own interest in Him, and estimate the blessedness which they may hope to derive from Him. This is the special topic on which we are now to dwell.

I. In entering upon it, it may be important to notice, in the first place, how common it is in the New Testament to announce the mediatorial person of Christ as the great subject of the sacred writers. A few examples will suffice. The evangelist Mark opens his gospel in these words, chapter first, verse first, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus Christ is the name by which the Saviour was known among men, and may be regarded as the cognomen of His humanity. “The Son of God” is a title of higher import. It expresses His deity. It was so understood by the Jews, so that when our Lord claimed it they charged Him with blasphemy, alleging that in calling Himself the Son of God, He made Himself equal with God. In reciting His life, therefore, Mark proposed to publish the

history of a Saviour who was at once human and divine, uniting in one person the nature of God and the nature of man.

The Gospel by John is opened in like manner. While in the first verse of the first chapter he says of Christ, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God," he adds in the fourteenth verse, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He who lived as a man on the earth was at the same time the Son of God, and hence in Him, as uniting the two natures in one person, there was an exhaustless fountain of "grace and truth."

It is sufficient to add one other example from the epistle of Paul to the Romans. At the third and fourth verses of the first chapter he proposes to write "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." A distinction is made between the two natures. They are expressly contrasted with one another. In one sense Christ was "the seed of David," and in another "the Son of God."

This first Epistle of John is opened in the very same manner. It is, however, much more full and explicit than any of the other announcements of the same subject to which we have adverted. This will be abundantly evidenced in our exposition of it. But before proceeding to that, we are constrained to pause for a moment and reflect on the singular fact which has been noticed.

Why is it that writer after writer in the New Testament is led to burst out upon his readers, in the very first words which he utters, with a sublime proclamation of the Saviour's mediatorial person? They fully sympathize with the exalted

representation of the prophet Isaiah, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Why does he speak in this strain? It is because of the amazing nature of the truth itself, and of the deep interests involved in it. The assumption of human nature by the Son of God is the most stupendous fact in the history of providence. Angels "desire to look into it," and are amazed at it. It will be the subject of devout inquiry and adoring wonder to the whole intelligent and holy creation of God throughout eternity. In the meantime the salvation of the sinner is suspended upon it. In the incarnation of the Word there is provided for him an all-sufficient Saviour. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved."

Let us therefore now proceed and consider—

II. The full development of the mediatorial person of Christ, contained in the opening verses of the first Epistle of John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." (Vers. 1-3.)

In these simple but significant words there is much to arrest our attention and impress our minds. The apostle does not seem to pursue any prescribed order in his discourse. He speaks now of the divine nature, then of the human, and sometimes of both together. It is obvious the writer feels the incapacity of human language to convey the thoughts

that burned within his soul. The utmost simplicity distinguishes his style, yet there is a depth of meaning in his words which no human intellect can fathom. His writings resemble the discourses of our Lord more than those of any other New Testament author. Profound sentiments conveyed in the simplest terms are their distinguishing feature. They possess at the same time a practical bearing which the thoughtful reader cannot fail to recognize and feel. Every principle is enunciated as an appeal to the heart and life. Nothing is put in the form of a cold and imperative dogma, which may be received or rejected without good or evil to the soul. The truth is presented to us as food to the hungry and water to the thirsty soul. Whosoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever, while he that refuseth it must die in his sins. This practical feature of the apostle's sublime announcement of the Saviour's mediatorial person will be abundantly evident as we dwell on the separate clauses that compose it, which we now proceed to do in the order of the passage.

"That which was from the beginning." Two interpretations have been given of this clause. One is—that which Christ was "from the time when he was first manifested in the flesh," and the other is—that which He had always been, before He appeared on earth, as well as when He was upon it. The former is confined to His earthly existence, while the latter comprehends His pre-existence and eternity. We are best instructed in the right interpretation by consulting parallel passages in the divine Word. You find one such in Prov. viii. 22, 23 : "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The passage can apply to no other person than Christ, and it determines the "beginning," to signify that He existed before the work of creation began, and consequently that He existed

eternally. It is precisely the same view that is given in the passage already quoted from John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He was with God from the beginning in a way which implied that He was God. In other words, He was eternal. Recollect it is John who uses these words in the commencement of both his gospel and epistle, and we cannot help seeing he meant to ascribe eternity to Christ in both. Precious truths! The Saviour whom he reveals is no creature. He is self-existent. He is essentially what He is. He is eternal. He is therefore God. This is the great being whom John has to announce as "God our Saviour."

Again—that "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." This being, who was from eternity, became a man. The assertion is a contrast to the preceding one. This confirms the view taken of the former; for it is clear the apostle wishes to convey the idea that it was a marvellous thing that He should appear as a man who had been from the beginning, from eternity. Strange, however, as it was, it was true. There was the fullest evidence of the fact. The ears of men had heard Him, their eyes had seen Him, their hands had felt Him. Clearer or surer proof could neither be asked nor given. The expression, "our hands have handled," refers no doubt to the words of Christ after His resurrection—"be-
 ✓ hold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." This is a happy allusion. The nature which Christ took when he was born of Mary, He lifted up out of the grave at His resurrection. We have, therefore, a Saviour, who not merely became a man, but wears His glorified humanity in heaven. His incarnation is thus associated with the redemption of man. He took our nature, stood in our place, and has taken possession of heaven as our representative. While

therefore, we have everything in His eternity and deity to encourage our confidence, we are assured of His sympathy by His humanity. "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Nothing is wanting in Him to render Him a suitable and sufficient Saviour. He may well be accounted "all our salvation, and all our desire."

Once more—He is denominated "the word of life." In this title He is presented as the link of connection between God and the sinner. He is "the word of God"—He by whom God speaks to us, and to whom we are indebted for all we know of Him. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." But His teaching is no cold inoperative lesson. He is "the word of life." When God speaks to us by Him, it is to put us in possession of life. What life? Life in every sense in which we can enjoy it. Our natural life is through Him. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life." Our spiritual life is from Him. He said himself, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." He means that the soul dead in sin is then made alive unto God, for He says, "The hour is coming and now is." He had quickened many souls, and would continue to do so. The resurrection life would be imparted by Him. "The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth." The life of glory would emanate from Him. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Truly, if such is the work to be done by Christ, He needs to be all that He is declared to be in this passage, divine as well as human, almighty in power as well as infinite

in love. All that, then, He is. He has only to speak and it is done. He is "the word of life."

Farther—"The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness," the apostle adds. The special allusion in these words is to the manifestation of all that had been declared respecting Christ. The evidence was full, clear, and satisfactory. There was the consciousness of *experience*. Many had felt His power. He called the apostles, and His words were so irresistible that they could not refuse to leave all and follow Him. Thousands besides were compelled to say, "Never man spake like this man,"—"We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." There was a certainty of personal *observation*. His works on both the bodies and souls of men were obvious to every eye. As He healed the sick body, He cured the distempered mind. All might judge for themselves. His saving power was patent to all. There was the assurance of undoubted *testimony*. The apostles might well say, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from the Father honour and glory." No doubt can be entertained by any mind, rightly informed and exercised, respecting the sufficiency of Christ. It has been "manifested." No excuse can be valid for either rejecting or declining to accept Him as a Saviour. We may well ask with Paul, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Finally—the apostle sums up all, saying, "We show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Wonderful words! How can we

apprehend their meaning and force? Christ is called, "That eternal life which was with the Father." He dwelt with Him as His "fellow," and partook in common with Him of eternal life. Christ, as the Son of God, is essentially possessed of life in its highest exercises and enjoyments. It is of Him John says in this epistle, chap. v. 20, "This is the true God and eternal life." It is specially ascribed to Him as Mediator. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." It is in this view He says, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Life is His to impart it to sinners. "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." It is laid up in Him, in His mediatorial person, as in a fountain to which sinners may ever come and receive out of His fulness. "In him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him." For "He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." And He now stands and calls upon the children of men, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Sinner, come to Jesus, and you shall have pardon. Come to Jesus, and you shall have purity. Come, and you shall have power. Come and live for ever.

Such is the view presented to us in this passage of the mediatorial person of Christ. It may properly be summed up in the language of Paul to Timothy, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Only recollect that Paul as well as John presents this fundamental truth, not in the light of a disputed doctrine, but of a great practical principle. He desires that sinners should see, on the one hand, that without such a

Saviour they must perish, but that, on the other, the Saviour they need is provided and offered ; so that it lies upon them to come and embrace Him that they may be saved. "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ; and by him to reconcile all things to himself, even you that were alienated, and enemies by wicked works."

In conclusion, there is one lesson which I am desirous to press specially on your attention. It is the necessity of being enlightened by the Spirit to discern the glory of Christ as a manifested Saviour. The apostle discovers deep anxiety that he might be thus known to those whom he addressed. He repeats again and again, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." But in all this he betrays a fear that, notwithstanding all the plainness, and fulness, and urgency of his words, they might remain ignorant of Christ. It has been well said, "The manifestation of Christ in the flesh is one thing, and a most blessed thing too, but a manifestation of him to the soul, by his word and Spirit, is quite another." Paul has distinctly said, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Pray, brethren, for His divine illumination. Unless you are taught by Him, you shall not estimate the precious discoveries of the text. You can neither know your need nor discern the sufficiency of the Saviour whom it reveals. But if he be your instructor, you will feel and confess both. This is not a matter of speculation, but of experience. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.—God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 4-6.)

LECTURE II.

"That ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."—1 JOHN i. 3.

THE knowledge of Christ is the basis of fellowship. This sentiment is the link of connection between the text and the verses which precede it. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, and seen, and handled, of the Word of life—declare we unto you," in order "that ye may have fellowship with us."

It is assumed that without the views of Christ which the apostle had expressed, there could not be the fellowship of which he speaks. How could there be? Suppose one man to look upon Christ as a creature, and another as the Creator, and how could these have fellowship with one another? The moment they interchanged their views they would contradict one another. We must here see eye to eye, or we cannot have fellowship.

On the other hand, whenever the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, there springs up within it a strong sympathy with all those who entertain similar views of Him. If, like the apostle Paul, we can say, "It hath pleased God to reveal his Son in me," we will, after his example, "assay to join ourselves to the disciples." If we have been taught to say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord," we shall immediately

add, "grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." For a beautiful example see **I** John v. 1, 2.

What, then, is the nature of that fellowship into which we are led by the saving knowledge of Christ? It is briefly, but comprehensively, described in the text under a threefold aspect—fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and with all those who believe the gospel. Let us consider the subject in these several views of it.

I. It is the believer's privilege to have "fellowship with the Father." He has been enabled to behold God in the light of a Father, and to cherish towards Him the feelings of a child. And herein consists the essence of the fellowship which he maintains with Him.

Boys
It is not difficult to explain how it is so. Before Jesus ascended to His glory, He said to His disciples, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He gave them to understand that as was the relation in which He stood to God, so also was theirs. He was a Father to Him, and so also was He to them. They were brought into this relation to God because Christ was their substitute and representative. He had taken their nature, stood in their place, answered the demands of the law against them, and appeared in the presence of God for them. They took shelter in Him before the judgment-seat. They were united with Him so as to be looked upon in Him. They could pray, "behold, O God, our shield; look upon the face of thine anointed." Thus standing before God, they could bear the effulgence of His glory. They could look up and say, "Abba Father." They could say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"—and so enter into fellowship with Him.

If we pursue this thought it will clearly unfold to us the nature of the fellowship to which the believer is admitted with his heavenly Father—that of a child with a beloved parent.

As a child has near access to his father, so has he to God. This privilege, and the grounds of it, are set forth with peculiar richness in the divine word. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God—let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” “Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” These gracious words and powerful arguments are put into our mouth by God himself, that we may approach him with all the confidence of children to a father.

As a child enjoys the assurance of his father’s favour, so has the believer that of God. He knows he is sinful and unworthy, but he believes that in Christ “he has redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Clouds and darkness may often arise to obscure his view, but he waits till the Sun of righteousness shall burst out from beneath them. And then he enjoys afresh the warmth of his reviving beams. He can look up and say, “my Lord and my God.”

As a child cherishes the love which he bears to his father, so does the believer toward God. He feels the force of that irresistible appeal, “now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be

sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He must say, "We love him because he first loved us."

In a word, the believer is exhorted, "delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." And this is the height of the fellowship to which he should aspire with God—to be able to say, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let it not be forgotten, too, that it is a duty as well as a privilege to maintain it, and there are many ways in which it may be done.

We should have fellowship with God in His works. So had David when he said, "when I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" How blessed to look on all the works of nature around us, and say, "my Father made them all."

We should more particularly seek to hold fellowship with God in His word. His will is more plainly revealed there, as well as His character and government. As we hold converse with a friend by letters of correspondence, so should we use the word of God as the medium of communion with Him. So regarding it let it be said of us, "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

We may have similar fellowship in the ordinances of grace. In them we may pray—"Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and that I may glory with thine inheritance." It would be alike our duty and wisdom to say with the Psalmist, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell

in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

So also should we see and hear Him in the dispensations of His providence. Whatever they may be, joyous or sorrowful, we should recognise their author and learn their lessons. We should say, "I will sing of judgment and of mercy; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

Can we find a man who attained to such fellowship as this with God? Yes—there is an example of it in Enoch. Of him it is written—"he walked with God." Jehovah was the chosen companion of his life. Wherever he was he saw Him. Whatever he did he recognised His judgment. However he was exercised he bowed submissive to His will. As a dutiful child with a loving father, leading him by the hand, he pursued the journey of life, until at last "he was not, for God took him." Let this be our example of fellowship with the Father. And that being explained, let us consider—

II. The fellowship of the believer "with his Son, Jesus Christ."

In the text this is pointedly distinguished from that which has been already considered. Nor is it difficult to perceive the reason of the distinction. Fellowship with the Father can be held only through Christ. He has said expressly, "I am the way—no man cometh unto the Father but by me." On the other hand fellowship with the Son is direct. The reason is that he has taken our nature, and converses with us in it. This is the substance of the statement in the verse preceding the text. It describes his mediatorial person—that he was at once divine and human, the word of life, the eternal life that was from the beginning with the Father, and yet was manifested in the flesh in the fulness of time. Being so constituted the sinner may have direct fellowship with Him, and deal with Him on all the concerns of his soul and

salvation. All he needs is to be enlightened to know Him. From the moment of his saving acquaintance with Him there commences a communion with Him, which is a perennial fountain of blessedness. And in order to understand what it is, we have only to consider it in the light of God's mediatorial person, as that is described in the verses to which we have adverted. Let us notice the views there presented to us.

He is described as the eternal Son. He was in the beginning with the Father. He is therefore possessed of all divine perfections. His wisdom is unerring, His power almighty, and His love infinite. This is the being who came to us in the capacity of a Saviour. His call is to every sinner, "come unto me." He is revealed to him in His greatness, that he may have confidence in Him. This is the fellowship to which he is invited. He is assured He is "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." The more He is trusted the more He is honoured. The sinner is encouraged to rely on His perfections, and if he acts up to his privilege and holds fellowship with Him, he may express it in the assured and confiding language of the apostle—"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

Again He is described in His humanity. He was seen, heard, and handled. He assumed that humanity for the very purpose of qualifying Him to be the Saviour of men. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.—It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of His people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted. Now, if these views are

realized to what fellowship must they lead with Christ? There is the fellowship of a common humanity. He is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." He has felt all that man can feel. He has the sympathy of a brother. Especially He endured all the sorrows of humanity. He suffered from poverty, neglect, reproach, injustice, and cruelty. He agonized under mental grief, as well as bodily tortures. He was tried by temptations the most harassing and powerful. Well, therefore, does He understand our trials. If God said to the Israelites—"love ye the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," how may we reckon on the sympathy of Jesus? He has said, "in all your afflictions I am afflicted." Poor suffering humanity will ever find a sympathetic friend in Him. Especially the sin-stricken soul should hear Him saying—"come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The more bitter the exercises of the soul, the more tender is His fellowship. Try it and you will find he is indeed "a brother born for adversity."

Not merely, however, is He described in His deity to encourage our confidence, and in His humanity to assure us of His sympathy, but in His office also as "the word of life," He has "eternal life" as the Saviour of men. It is His to dispense it to sinners. He says to all who believe in Him, "because I live ye shall live also." It is their privilege to say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me." He is the fountain of life to all who will come to Him. That is the office entrusted to Him, and which He is ever able and willing to execute. "He is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church." We have only, therefore, to come, and come, and come again, to Him, that we "may have life, and have it more abundantly."

Surely if we are encouraged to have fellowship with the Father, we may be specially encouraged to maintain it with His son, Jesus Christ. There is everything in Him to invite us to cultivate it. We may well say, as we think upon Him, "my meditation of Him is sweet,"—"His name is as ointment poured forth." They who experience it most can best testify—"I sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste." And if we be wise we will never rest till, in the interchange of constant love with Him, we can say, my beloved is mine, and I am His."

Such is the fellowship we may hold with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. But this is not the end of it. There arises out of it another exercise which we now proceed to consider—

III. The fellowship of believers with one another. If we have fellowship with the Father, then we are His children, and are animated by their spirit. If we have fellowship with Jesus Christ, then we are His redeemed ones, and the subjects of His grace. It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, that wherever there is fellowship with the Father and the Son, there must also be fellowship with those who believe in them. And this is the very light in which the subject is presented in the text, where the three forms of fellowship are treated as indissolubly connected with one another.

What, then, is the fellowship of believers? Let the apostle Paul reply—"There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." The communion arising out of such unity must be universal, and pervading throughout all who are bound by it. They are one in Christ Jesus, and we just name some of the forms in which their fellowship will appear.

They have a community of nature. They are all "partakers of the divine nature," and obey its impulses. Their tastes and habits are therefore alike heavenly.

They have a community of views. They can all say, "To them that believe Christ is precious." He is in their esteem "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

They have communion in feelings. Loving Christ, they love one another. "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

They have communion in joy and sorrow. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." As it is with the members of the body, so it is in the church. .

They have communion in the kind offices of brotherly love. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

They have fellowship in the progress of true religion. They can sympathize with David, when, having poured out his ardent aspirations for the triumphs of godliness, he said, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

They have fellowship in the prospects of heaven and eternity. They rejoice to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

It ought to be the aim of believers to cultivate such fellowship as this. There are many reasons to enforce it.

One is their own good. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment on the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Another is the advancement of religion on the earth. Jesus prayed "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

And to these let it be added, that it is vain to speak of fellowship with the Father and the Son if we have not fellowship with one another. Wherever one of these is they must all be. They are inseparable. They will all be found, too, in an equal measure. Just as we have fellowship with God as a Father, so shall we have fellowship with the Son as a Saviour; and as we have fellowship with the Son, so shall we have it with all who believe in Him. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loves his brother also."

LECTURE III.

“ And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.”—1 JOHN i. 4.

WHAT things? The mediatorial person and office of Christ, and the fellowship to which they lead. The apostle had described the former in these words, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life ; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” And the latter he represents as the result of this knowledge of Christ whenever it is really received; “That ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” He makes known Christ that so men may have fellowship with God as children with a Father, with the Son as sinners with a Saviour, and with one another as the partakers of a common salvation. It is with all this in view he adds, in the language of the text, “ And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.”

It is assumed in these words that the fulness of joy arises out of the fellowship which is produced by the knowledge of Christ. This is the sentiment which it will be the object of

the present discourse to illustrate. And our prayer is that its truth may not only be proved by evidence, but known by experience.

In the farther consideration of it, we shall draw our illustration from the threefold fellowship of the believer, showing in each case how the fulness of joy may be expected naturally to arise out of it—out of fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and with all who believe the Gospel.

I. The fulness of joy springs out of “fellowship with the Father.”

This is self-evident. Suppose a sinner so to see and confide in God as his Father, that he may be said to have fellowship with Him, enjoying a sense of His favour, and reciprocating it with a feeling of love, it is plain he must be happy in God. It is ever so regarded in the Scriptures. When God invites sinners to forsake the fellowship of the ungodly and to come into communion with Himself, it is in these words, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” The promise by which the invitation is enforced is supposed to secure true blessedness to all who shall enjoy it.

A brief contemplation of what may be expected from God as a Father, will make this statement plain. A father is ready to pardon his children. He is accounted a monster among men who is inexorable toward his own children. Remember, then, how God is described by His Son in the three parables which appear to have been delivered in the same discourse, of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the lost son. “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” The believer knows such is the

readiness of God to receive him at all times, when in the spirit of penitence he cries to Him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

A father has tender sympathy with his children. Their joys and sorrows are all his own. How he agonizes with their griefs and pains, and is gladdened by their success and happiness ! Is it not written, then, "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him?" "He knows our frame, and remembers we are dust." He has said, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." And His children may say, in the assurance of His sympathy, "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

A father teaches his children. What he knows himself he makes known to them. He does so that they may know how to choose the good and refuse the evil. Observe, then, how the promise runs, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children." They are taught that so they may have peace. The earthly father teaches his child, believing that he is so preparing him for prosperity ; and God says to His child, "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings ; and the years of thy life shall be many : take fast hold of instruction, let her not go ; keep her, for she is thy life."

A father corrects his children. Observe, then, how an inspired apostle applies this thought, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence ; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness."

A father encourages his children. It is God who has said,

"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." He requires parents to foster every good desire and effort in their children by tokens of their favour and satisfaction. And herein he only asks them to imitate His own providence, in which He causes His children to experience that "in keeping his commandments there is a great reward."

A father protects his children. With what parental care Joseph and Mary bore away the child Jesus out of the reach of the persecuting Herod! The parent will sacrifice his life to preserve that of his child, ^{as} God's promise to His children is, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye."

A father provides for his children. Hear, then, the word of the Lord, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away."

A father delights to grant all the righteous desires of his children, and in reference to this parental disposition, Jesus has said, "If you fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" He specifies the Holy Spirit, because in that gift all others are comprehended.

Suppose, now, that this view of God is realized. A sinner, through the knowledge of Christ, is brought into fellowship with God. Regarding Him as a Father, and cherishing toward Him the spirit of a child, he knows that he has His pardoning mercy, and tenderest sympathy and instruction, and if need be, correction, and yet His encouragement and protection, with the assurance of what is best for him here, and eternal blessedness hereafter. What, then, ought to be his joy? Surely the text is not too strong, "These things have I written unto you, that our joy may be full."

How lamentable it is that sinners do not seek happiness where it may be found—in God! Well has David said, “There be many that say, who will show us some good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and that will put joy and gladness into our hearts.” It is almost as lamentable, and more unreasonable that believers do not live up to their privilege and enjoy God as they ought to do. Recognizing Him as their Father and holding fellowship with Him, their joy in Him ought to be full. “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”

II. Fulness of joy springs out of “fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ.”

There is a happy expression of the union between the Father and the Son, as the source of joy to the believer who has fellowship with God, in the words of Paul to the Corinthians, “We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” All the communion which a sinner can enjoy with God is through Christ. It is only as he contemplates “God in Christ” he has fellowship with Him as a Father.

Besides the happiness thus derived from God, however, there is a fresh source of joy opened up to the believer in Christ himself. He has direct and immediate fellowship with Him, and while he cultivates the habit of “looking unto Jesus,” he derives virtue from the sight, as the dying Israelite did from the serpent of brass when he gazed upon it in the wilderness.

It will be profitable to consider how it is that the contemplation of Christ, by the eye of faith, is calculated to inspire with joy.

First, then, His person is such as to call forth this affec-

tion. He is "God manifest in the flesh." He has become such for the very purpose of being a Saviour of men. He has taken our nature into union with His own divine nature, that He might redeem it from sin, and death, and sorrow. With what propriety, therefore, was His manifestations in the flesh thus announced by the angelic messenger, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." He was fully equal to the great task He had undertaken. None other could save. In Him, but in Him only, could the sinner repose his confidence. With Mary he might say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Again, the work of Christ affords matter of joy. "He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,² having been made a curse for us." "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Invariably the work of Christ and the design of it are thus associated in the Scriptures. It was an atonement for sin, that men might be released from its condemnation. Every one who apprehends it, and is willing to confide in it, may say, "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." His work is perfect, and the sinner, who is willing to accept it, is presented with a full and free salvation.

His gracious offices, still continued, must farther heighten the joy of all who have fellowship with Him in them. He is their prophet, ever teaching them by His word, and Spirit, and providence. "He of God is made unto them wisdom." And if any man lack wisdom, he has only to ask it of Him and obtain it. He is their priest, ever applying the benefits of His sacrifice to their souls, while He pleads its merit for

their pardon, and makes it effectual as His plea for their purity. "Who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness ; by whose stripes ye were healed." He is their king, ruling in their hearts, governing their lives, restraining their enemies, and overruling all things for their highest good. What a perennial source of blessedness is here ?

Once more, we have the Spirit of Christ, and the blessed promises of which He is the fulfiller. These are throughout associated in our Lord's farewell discourse to His disciples. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you." And after setting forth all the gracious benefits which His Spirit would confer, He concludes with the words of warning and consolation, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

To all this must be added His everlasting covenant. All the blessings He bestows are secured by covenant. And nothing is omitted which is needful for His people. In the darkest hour they may fall back on its sure provision, and say with David, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

All these things considered, it must be seen the Apostle Paul spoke advisedly when he exhorted the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say rejoice." If they will rejoice in the Lord, they may and ought to rejoice alway. There is sufficient ground to do so in Him. His

person and work, and offices, and Spirit, and covenant, constitute a source of joy which is inexhaustible. What He is himself, what He has done, what He continues to do, in His gracious offices, by His blessed Spirit, and in accordance with His everlasting covenant, are sufficient to dispel all fears, to assure the highest hopes, and establish the firmest happiness.

To these ends only one thing is needed, and that is fellowship with Christ. Hence He is ever saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ; he that believeth in me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." How deplorable, that with such a fountain of joy within our reach, we are so prone to "forsake the fountain of living water, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." Let us hear Christ saying, "Ask and receive that your joy may be full." And consider the testimony of His beloved disciple, "These things write I unto you, that our joy may be full."

III. The fulness of joy is greatly confirmed by fellowship with believers. It is so in many ways.

They instruct one another. It is a just observation of the wise man, "Iron sharpeneth iron ; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." How much we owe to the society of the wise and good. The interchange of thought is a principal means of advancement in knowledge. Hence the apostle expresses his high estimate of it, "let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." This is a precious opportunity of advancing the well-being and happiness of others. Alas, that it should so often be lost or abused.

Believers encourage one another. How touching the reflection of David on the days that were past, when he said, of his companions in other times, "we took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company." They conferred on their duties and difficulties, and strength-

ened one another's hands. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." We should aim at being thus useful to those with whom we are associated.

They comfort one another. After the death of Christ, two of the disciples journeyed together, going to Emmaus. They talked of all the things that had happened. As they did so, Jesus drew near, and went with them, and said, "what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" He listened patiently to their sad recital, and then addressed them in words of consolation. So appropriate were they, that as they thought upon them afterwards, they said, "did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" We should imitate Christ, and if we do so, we may well have reason to say of our conversation, "a word spoken in season, how good is it?"

Believers should warn one another. The command is, "thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother, but rebuke him." The duty is no doubt a difficult one. But fellowship requires that it shall be discharged. And if it be done in a right spirit, there will be a happy result. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, that will not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

They should aim in every way to edify one another, avoiding whatever may be hurtful, and doing whatever may be serviceable. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." "Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification."

By pursuing such a course, it is easy to see how the fellowship of Christians would tend to the fulness of their joy. We should act as though we heard every brother saying to us as Paul did to Philemon, "let me have joy of thee in

the Lord : refresh my bowels in the Lord." His appeal is the just appeal of all, "fulfil ye my joy." It is our duty to do nothing that may unnecessarily wound the spirit of another, but everything that may at once soothe and sanctify, so that their joy may be full. This is the legitimate claim of Christian fellowship.

In conclusion, how thankful we should be that the religion of Christ is one of joy. Such it truly is. Of all who live up to its high privileges and holy duties it may be said, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance ; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day ; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Then how deeply should we be humbled when we do not attain to this joy. It is evidence we do not know, and love, and serve the Lord as we ought to do. It should lead us to deep searchings of heart, and earnest supplications that we might be enabled to act worthy of our high vocation.

Let us aim at attaining to the joy which the gospel yields. We should do so for the sake of our own holiness. "When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." We should do so for the credit of religion. There is everything in it to commend it to men. And it is unworthy of its professors to exhibit a deportment calculated to dishonour it. We should do so for the honour of Christ. He is reflected in us. "Ye are the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Let His glory be seen in our joyous submission to His justifying righteousness, and cheerful obedience to His holy commandments—and so acting our joy may be full.

LECTURE IV.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."—1 JOHN I. 5-7.

THUS early does the apostle begin to apply his subject to the practical use of self-examination. He opened it with a sublime description of the mediatorial person and office of the Lord Jesus Christ. He showed how the perception of that great and wonderful truth, "God manifest in the flesh," led to the most blessed fellowship—to fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with the whole Church of believers. And he declared that such enlightenment and fellowship issued in the fulness of joy.

Having said so much on the privileges of believers, he deemed it necessary to address them in the tone of warning. They must beware of self-deception. They should be sure that they really knew the truth, and obeyed it, and that their fellowship was not a mere profession, but a spiritual reality. And with a view to enforce this lesson, he expressed himself in the language of the text, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If

we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

How appropriate and searching are these words. They contain a lesson of instruction, a warning against self-deception, and an encouraging direction. Let us address our attention to these three views of the subject. And may the Lord be our teacher.

I. A lesson of instruction. It is contained in the 5th verse, and consists of a description of the great Being, with whom we profess to have fellowship. "This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Both the manner and the matter of this lesson are very impressive.

The apostle adopts the manner of the deliverer of Israel when Ehud came to Eglon and said, "I have a message from God unto thee." It is indeed the style of our Lord Himself, who said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." It is intended to remind us that the word and ministry are to be understood and treated as a message from God. "He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man but God; who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit." In the present instance it is observable that no mention is made by name of the being from whom the message comes. "We have heard of him." Of whom? No doubt the glorious being described in the previous verses is meant. It is Jesus the Mediator. The apostle assumes he would be understood to speak of him. And thus his manner in this epistle is in harmony with his sublime introduction to the Apocalypse, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he

sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Impressive, however, as is the manner of the lesson before us, its matter is of far higher moment. "God is light." Its simplicity and comprehensiveness are amazing. It is so simple a child perceives the meaning, while it is so comprehensive as to render a full exposition impossible. There are, however, three principal ideas suggested by the figure on which it may be sufficient to dwell. Light is the emblem of knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

Of knowledge. God is omniscient. We pronounce this sentiment, but how limited our views of its meaning. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the creation." He sees all things as they are, in their true nature, and real influence. He cannot be deceived. Matter and mind are alike plain to His perception. Our motives, and feelings, and purposes are as palpable to Him as our bodies. But we cannot describe omniscience. The thought overwhelms us. We are relieved by quoting the words of inspiration, and must be satisfied with them—"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me, thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O Lord, it is known to thee altogether—the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

So also is light the emblem of holiness. God is "the Holy One," implying that none but He is absolutely and infinitely holy. Angels veil their faces and cry out in His presence, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." "Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in

his sight." On the sun itself there are spots to be seen, but there are none on the character of God. All He does is in un-deviating correspondence with perfect purity. "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." But His holiness is as far beyond our apprehension as His knowledge, and we can only quote and acquiesce in the words which the Spirit has put into our mouth—"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

Finally, light is the emblem of happiness. Infinite knowledge and holiness must be productive of infinite happiness. As God can never be deceived in apprehending, nor err in acting, the element of sorrow can never enter into His mind. On the contrary, He possesses within Himself all the sources of unmingled blessedness. His perfections are never-failing springs of joy. All His works contribute to His happiness. However mysterious they may sometimes appear to us, to Him they are irradiated with light and glory. He seeth the end from the beginning. And we may cry with the elders before His throne, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

To the sublime announcement that "God is light," it is added, "And in him is no darkness at all." Nor is this without its meaning. It is designed to teach us that no element enters into His light to obscure it. There is no limit to His knowledge, no stain on His holiness, no hindrance to His happiness. He is intellectually and morally perfect. We feel the propriety and force of the inspired description of Jehovah, and indeed all other language is felt to be far beneath the dignity of the theme. What a privilege that we are taught to say, "The works of his hands are verity and

judgment ; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy." "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And "this is the message we have heard of him, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

II. This lesson of the apostle is followed by a warning against self-deception. Indeed, it was obviously introduced for the sake of founding the warning upon it. And, therefore, as soon as it was solemnly announced, the apostle immediately adds, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

In considering this warning it is well to notice the force of the terms employed to express it.

"If we say that we have fellowship." We say it, but we may herein be uttering what is untrue. This is a common mode of speaking in the Scriptures. "A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works ; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." It does not follow, because we say we have faith or fellowship, that we must have them. Profession is not principle. We may be self-deceived, or we may be hypocrites.

"And walk in darkness." In the midst of our profession of fellowship, it is possible we may be walking in darkness. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, error, and sin. It is the opposite of light. And so far may the spirit of self-deception or hypocrisy prevail, that with the highest professions on our lips, our walk may be utterly inconsistent with them. Walk is used to describe the habitual deportment. It is not merely that we may be betrayed by the force of

temptation into some inconsistent action, but that our habit of life is contrary to sound principle and true godliness.

“We lie” in such a case. Our outward profession is contrary to the inward reality. This strong term is used because it is fitted both to expose and denounce the base inconsistency. And it is well calculated to impress us with the abhorrence which the Author of the Scriptures must feel toward such conduct.

“And do not the truth.” If such be our deportment, we are disobedient to the truth. The language reminds us of the words of Christ, “Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

It is plain, from this brief exposition, that the warning of the apostle is designed to stand in contrast to the lesson which he had just delivered. Looking at it, then, in this light, how powerful is his appeal! God is light, infinite in knowledge, holiness, and happiness. Who, then, can have fellowship with such a Being? Is it he who is walking in darkness, which is the emblem of ignorance, and error, and sin? Impossible! “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” This is the very argument which the Apostle Paul addresses with so much power to the Hebrews, saying, “let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things

are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

With these solemn words before us, let us inquire who they are that belie their profession of fellowship with God?

The ignorant do so. Many assume they have fellowship with God, and yet can give no account of the grounds or reasons of it. They have no adequate conception of sin, or of themselves, or of the Saviour, or of God, or of the world, or of eternity. They are walking in darkness, yet they have no fear. They take for granted that when they die, they shall pass as a matter of course into heaven. But their hope is based only on their ignorance. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

The erroneous present a more aggravated case. What a description does Isaiah give of such! "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?" The Apostle Paul describes the same, saying, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." The forms in which they do so are very various, and sometimes the very opposite of one another. One trusts in his innocence or righteousness. He does not see anything in himself why God should cast him off, but thinks he has done much to commend himself to His fellowship. Another relies not on himself at all, but on the very circumstance that he disclaims himself and adheres to "a form of sound words" in the creed which he has learned from his youth, and which he holds tenaciously in the letter, while a stranger to its power and spirit. Many more rest in the formality of outward rites and ceremonies, "drawing near to God with the mouth, and honouring him with the lip, while the heart is far from him." All such, whatever their profession of fellowship may be, are walking in darkness, and do not the truth

Above all, they who allow themselves in sin, fall under the censure of the apostle. We might have supposed it impossible that any could be either so deceived or inconsistent as to make profession of fellowship with God, while yet, if they reflected at all, they must be conscious they are walking in the paths of iniquity. Men have been dishonest, or drunken, or cruel, or impure, and yet made a religious profession. Nor are such always sensible of their own inconsistencies. It is to be feared many are going to the judgment with their sins, without alarm. It is of them Christ says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

These are they who walk in darkness, and can have no real fellowship with that God who is light.

III. Let us then consider the seasonable and encouraging direction which the apostle gives to those who would have the enjoyment and advantage of real fellowship. It is contained in the 7th verse. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

The direction of the apostle exactly corresponds with the invitation of the prophet, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." The encouragement of another prophet proceeds on the same principle, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain, unto the earth." The Apostle Paul expresses the same sentiment, in the form of an appeal and a counsel, "Ye were sometime darkness,

but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of the light."

Keeping these passages before us as our directory, it may be profitable to inquire what is implied in walking in the light so as to attain to the enjoyment of fellowship? In other words, what should we do that we may have so high a privilege?

1. First, then, a clear apprehension of the truth is essential to fellowship. The ground of a sinner's hope must be distinctly seen. No one can have solid and permanent enjoyment of God who does not well understand the doctrine of justification by faith. He who does see it clearly, and acquiesce in it cordially, may and ought to have it. It is thus we learn to say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the property of faith to discern, receive, and rejoice in the truth that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

2. The believer, thus enlightened and brought into fellowship with God, must exercise the utmost watchfulness against sin. Whatever sin is allowed, and in whatever measure, it will obscure the object of faith, and darken the evidence of his interest in it. The clouds that hide the sun from the view of the beholder, are emblems of those sins which hide the Sun of righteousness from the perception of the believer. His faith cannot penetrate through the darkness which they create. It is the law of God that whenever sin enters peace departs. The man who imagines he can have both is fearfully deceived. Whenever we are betrayed into sin, our duty is to humble ourselves under it, and confess it, and in the spirit of self-abasement bring it to the Saviour. Then may we exercise "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." In this habit of crucifying sin, we shall consult for our peace. And, hence, we have the exhorta-

tion of Christ, "Watch ye, therefore ; what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

3. Finally, he who would walk in the light and enjoy the fellowship of God must abound in welldoing. There is a most instructive passage, illustrative and confirmatory of this sentiment, in the 58th chapter of Isaiah. The people are there represented to bewail that, although they waited on the forms of religion, they had not its enjoyment. They cry, "Wherefore have we fasted and thou seest not?" The prophet explains the mystery. He tells them they were indulging practices which were unlawful. They were contentious with one another, and oppressive to others. Therefore God hid His face from them. He tells them these habits must be laid aside. But more than that, they must engage in doing good. "Deal thy bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out to thy house, cover the naked, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Act thus, and "then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." He repeats his counsel—"If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday ; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones ; and thou shalt be as a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." This is the secret of religious enjoyment. "He that watereth others, shall himself be watered." Exercise is essential to the health of the body, and if we exercise ourselves by grace in godliness and good works, our "souls shall be in health and prosper." Thus "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

He names fellowship with one another. But that includes all the forms of fellowship to which believers are admitted.

The fellowship which they have with each other, grows out of that which they have with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Surely this is a blessed reward for a life of faith and godliness. It is the highest and purest bliss.

Fellowship with God! He who enjoys it contemplates Him as a Father, in whose bounty and grace he can ever repose, appropriating the gracious word, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

Fellowship with Christ! In the enjoyment of it he has the sensible presence of an all-sufficient Saviour. He goes up the wilderness of life leaning on the beloved. In sweet communion he can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Fellowship with the whole church of God! His soul is drawn out "to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent in whom is all his delight." And he anticipates the realization of the glorious congratulation, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

LECTURE V.

“And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”—1 JOHN I. 7.

A FOUNTAIN hath been opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” That fountain it is of which the apostle speaks in the text. It is the blood of Christ. And it possesses these two features, that it alone can cleanse from the defilement of sin, and that it is effectual to all who can be induced to wash in it. No sin can be removed without it, all sin with it. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

It is not sufficient, however, at present to consider this great doctrine generally as it is announced in the text ; it is introduced in a connexion which requires to be specially noticed. The apostle had been treating of Christian fellowship, and had shown with whom it was to be maintained, what was inconsistent with it, and how we might hope to enjoy it. He had said, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,” adding in connexion with this counsel the encouraging assurance contained in the text—“And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Considering the nature of the exercise,^r therefore, in which we are engaged, endeavouring to understand this Epistle of John, it will be necessary to notice, 1. the connexion of the text ; and, 2. the blessed doctrine comprehensively, though briefly expressed in it.

I. Consider the connexion of the text. The blood of Christ and its cleansing efficacy are associated with fellowship. The question is, what is the relation between them to which the apostle adverts?

Fellowship is to be understood here in its widest acceptation as comprehending that which is maintained with the Father and the Son, and all true believers. The blood of Christ is essential to it in all these exercises. And our inquiry is why it is so?

Without it we can have no fellowship with the Father. The Apostle Paul has said of the entrance of the High Priest into the holiest of all—"Into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." The High Priest alone could enter at all; even he was permitted to enter but once in the year; when he did so he must carry with him the blood of the sin-offering and sprinkle it on and before the mercy-seat; and this blood so sprinkled was to be regarded as an atonement for himself and the people. All the circumstances were so ordered as to impress the worshipper with the great truth that his access to God could not be without blood. He was thus taught his own sinfulness on the one hand, and the holiness of God upon the other. If, however, he did come with the appointed blood, he might do so with all confidence. And the apostle thus applies the emblematic lesson to the sinner's approach by the blood of Christ, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The penitent sinner, carrying the blood of Jesus in the hand of faith, and sprinkling the mercy-

seat, may have fellowship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He may encourage himself as he approaches saying, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The same law obtains in holding fellowship with the Son also. How impressively this lesson is taught in His own ordinance of the Supper. That ordinance is the outward expression of fellowship with Him, and it thus teaches how that fellowship is to be enjoyed. "He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you." And in heaven, where the fellowship is maintained in perfection, the song of the redeemed is, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How much more must it be necessary for us, while still on earth, and burthened with much sin, to hold fellowship with Christ through His blood? In this view the life of the believer is well expressed when it is said, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

• Nor is there any other basis on which believers can hold fellowship with one another as the followers of Christ. They may truly say, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The death of Christ is the bond of their union. They are alike sinners, and have no hope but the death of Jesus. They are alike believers in its efficacy, and their community of interest and confidence in it gives them a deep concern in one another. They can rejoice in one another's joys, and sympathise in one another's sorrows, as the common beneficiaries of the crucified one. They can well understand how their fellowship is suspended on the great doctrine that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

It is to be borne in mind also that fellowship in all these views, with the Father, and the Son, and believers, as it is begun by the reception of this doctrine, must ever be maintained by the application of it. We can never come to God otherwise, and we may always come to Him by the peace-speaking blood of Jesus. Whenever we are defiled by sin, and our sensible fellowship with the Father is interrupted, we must betake ourselves afresh to the fountain of atoning blood, and cleansed there, renew the broken communion. As we would at any time walk with the beloved by the way, we must talk with Him as Moses and Elias did of His decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem. No theme is so agreeable to Him. And our spirit should be in harmony with that of His apostle when He said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto me." And so in order to bind the hearts of the disciples in holy brotherhood, we must have recourse to the blood of Christ. Thence we derive our strongest arguments for forgiveness and forbearance. There we find the most powerful appeal for the tenderest sympathies and the kindest services. In short, as we live under the influence of the blood of Christ, so shall we love God, and Christ, and one another. We shall have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, and all who believe, just as we realize and enjoy the precious doctrine that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Let us, therefore, having seen the connection in which this truth is introduced to our notice, proceed to consider—

II. The blessed doctrine itself. The statement is short, but the sentiment conveyed by it is vast. It expresses both the efficacy of the blood of Christ and the reason of it. It will be necessary to notice both of these, beginning with the latter.

1. Whence does the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin arise? Not merely from divine appointment, although there was a divine appointment. That appointment was made because it was seen by the Omniscient mind to be effectual. It constituted at once the "power of God and the wisdom of God." There is a reference in the text to the reason of its sufficiency. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son (and because He is God's Son) cleanseth us from all sin." The apostle testifies, "It was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." In the nature of the case it could not be. There was no correspondence between the disease and the remedy. No appointment, even were it divine, could render it available. The same may be said of the blood of any creature, even of the most exalted archangel, or the whole company of angels. But there was in the Son of God that which made His blood suitable and efficacious. As the Son of God He was the Fellow of the Father. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. When He assumed human nature, His deity dwelt in it. The deity could not suffer, but the humanity did. The mysterious person of the Redeemer was constituted of the two natures. He was "God manifest in the flesh." Hence arose the infinite value of His atonement. "Feed the Church of God," saith Paul, "which he hath purchased with his own blood." It was His own blood, inasmuch as it was the blood of that humanity in which the Deity dwelt. It possessed in the eye of God an infinite value. And on that ground the gracious announcement might be made to men, without limitation or condition—"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This is the reason of its efficacy, and it prepares us to consider—

2. The efficacy itself—"It cleanseth from all sin."

The terms are as universal as it is possible for language to make them. They undoubtedly teach that there is efficacy

in the blood of Christ sufficient to cleanse all the sins of all the men that have ever dwelt or ever shall dwell upon the earth. If there shall prove to be any whose sins have not been cleansed it must be traced to some other cause than the want of sufficiency in the blood of Christ. It will bring the subject more closely home, however, if we direct attention to some of the special forms of sin, showing how in every case the blood of Christ avails to remove it.

There is original sin. Under the deep conviction of it David exclaimed, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It was only to the deep-seated depravity of his nature he could ascribe the sins into which he had been betrayed contrary to his judgment and conscience and character. Yet humbling as was his sense of his great vileness in this respect he did not hesitate to pray—"Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean? wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." He knew there was blood, of which that washing was an emblem, sufficient to cleanse his depraved nature. It is the same lesson we are taught very impressively in the administration of baptism to infant children. If it have any meaning it is emblematic of two great truths—the sinfulness of the infant presented, and the efficacy of atoning blood to meet the extremity. For why is an infant presented if it be not under the conviction that it needs to be cleansed? And why is water applied if it be not to express the assurance that there is virtue in the blood which it represents to take away sin? Baptism is a standing testimony that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from original sin.

There is again actual sin. Alas! how mightily does it prevail. It is graciously ordered, however, that many of the examples of restored sinners, recorded in the Scriptures, are those of notorious offenders. Such are Mary Magdalene, and Paul, and the murderers of our Lord. Of the first it is declared Christ had cast out from her distempered mind a legion

of seven devils. Of the second it is taught that mercy was extended to him that he might be a pattern to all that hereafter should believe in Jesus. And as to the third our Lord directed that the first offer of His gospel should be made to them. And when it was preached to them three thousand embraced it, and were accepted by the Church and its great Head. These facts, and many similar to them in the history of a preached Gospel, have placed the doctrine beyond all question, that there is no amount of transgression from which the blood of Christ cannot cleanse. To the most abandoned God has said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you."

There is, farther, the guilt of sin. How fearfully is it accumulated. Which of God's commandments has not the sinner broken? "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all," but every sinner has offended in all points. Be it so, there is a remedy. There is a full and free pardon through the blood of atonement. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." And on the ground of His sacrifice, the invitation is addressed to sinful men—"Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

So also is there the power of sin. It might be supposed this was not to be overcome. All expedients, indeed, have been tried in vain, except that which has been furnished by the blood of Christ. But that avails. And hence language is employed to describe its power, in the Scriptures, of the most peculiar and forcible character. Paul argues—"If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how

much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Peter appeals, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as ye have been redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish." The whole doctrine of the purification of the sinner by the blood of Christ is thus summed up—"He loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This surely is efficacious.

Yet again, there are the sins of believers. These also are contemplated, but it is in connection with the remedy in the blood of Christ. It is to believers John says, "my little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is assumed they may sin, but they are urged to betake themselves to the fountain in which they shall be cleansed. They should do so without delay. The temptation is, because they have sinned, to fly from God as did Adam in the garden. But as they value a return to peace and purity let them go afresh to the open fountain, and again plunging beneath its waters, rise again to newness of life.

Even the best services of believers, however, are not faultless. Sin attaches to all they are and all they do. There are none so sensible of this and ready to confess it as they are themselves. Often, while others applaud them, they blush and are ashamed to lift up their faces to the Lord. What strangers account their splendid virtues or achievements they may regard

themselves as utterly unworthy of any notice or reward from their heavenly Father. They can look for acceptance for them only through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ. Their aim is to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God." They put their prayers and their services alike into His censer to be presented by Him before the throne. And "they look for the mercy of God unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Their whole plea is reduced to the precious doctrine of the text, that the "blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

In conclusion, there is one thought which it is of the utmost importance to have impressed on our attention. Blood must be sprinkled before it is made effectual. Under the law, all things were purged by blood. The book, the people, the tabernacle, and the vessels of the ministry, were sprinkled with blood. So must it be with our souls. It will not suffice that the blood of Christ has been shed. It is not enough that it is of infinite value. It will not save us that it is sufficient to cleanse from all sin. It must be applied to the conscience. It was not enough that the poor sufferers lay at the pool of Bethesda mourning over their diseases, they must go into the healing waters when troubled by the descending angel. Whoever did so were made whole of whatever diseases they had. In like manner we must go into the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. We must go at first with all our sins, original and actual. We must continue to go as long as we live and contract fresh defilement. Let us not neglect to do so. Our salvation is dependent upon it. Wash and be clean, as did the leprous Naaman. You shall then prove by experience that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

LECTURE VI.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”—1 JOHN i. 8-10.

THE apostle had said, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” But who are understood by *us*? Certainly not all men. The impenitent, and unbelieving, and ungodly, have not been cleansed from their sin. They are still defiled by it, notwithstanding the efficacy of the blood of Christ. That blood must be applied that it may be effectual. That is what the apostle has before his mind in the verses now to be considered. There are some persons to whom the blood of Christ has been of no avail. Their guilt has become aggravated, because they have never sought its application to their souls. There are others who have been saved by it. It has cleansed their guilt and removed their impurity. And these are the persons described in the verses now before us. They warn us who they are to whom the blood of Christ has not been effectual, and they teach us who they are whom it has saved. They tell us how any and all may become partakers of its benefits. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we

have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Carefully observing these verses, we find in them three distinctive marks of those who have been cleansed from their sin by the blood of Christ. They have been convinced of sin—they have made confession of it to God—and they are deeply penitent on account of it. Let us consider these three exercises as they are here described.

I. Conviction of sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

In one sense, there are probably none who would say, "We have no sin." However blinded or hardened any may be, they are yet ready to own they are sinners, that they have done many things which they ought not to have done, while they have left undone as many which they ought to have performed.

The words must therefore be understood in a peculiar sense. It is of the utmost importance to ascertain what it is. And we cannot fail to see it if we look carefully at the context.

The apostle had taught that Christian fellowship could be enjoyed only through the blood of Christ. This is true of all the forms of fellowship, whether it be regarded as it is maintained with the Father or the Son, or those who believe in Him. Bearing this in mind, the apostle is to be understood as speaking of those who do not feel that their sin is such as to forbid the enjoyment of this fellowship, except through the blood of Christ. They would not be so daring as to say "they had no sin," yet they do not feel their sin to be such as to exclude them from Christian fellowship. This is the basis of the right interpretation of the apostle's words, and we must dwell for a little upon it.

Many will own they are sinners, and yet think they may

come to God as they are, independent of Christ and His blood. They do not say so, but they act so. Listen to their prayers, and they call upon God without any mention of His Son. It is obvious they have no sense of their real position in His sight. In their hearts they do not feel they are so odious and vile before God, as to be utterly unworthy to take His name into their lips. They are wanting in the humiliation becoming the sinner in the presence of the most high God. They have not entered into the spirit of Christ's words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." In this sense they say "they have no sin."

The same may be said of their fellowship with Christ. They may approve of His precepts, or even admire His moral character. They may think of Him as a model of perfection. But His death does not specially affect them. They attach no peculiar efficacy to the shedding of His blood. They think well of Him as an example, but they do not enter into any just view of His character as a Saviour. They have never felt the power of the great truth, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." And the reason is, they have no adequate sense of their sin.

So also as to fellowship with believers. They can meet them as friends, and neighbours, and brethren, but they have no perception of the communion arising out of the blood of Christ. They do not feel either its necessity or influence as a bond of union. Their views of brotherhood might all be independent of it. And this arises out of their inadequate idea of their own sinfulness and that of others.

It cannot be difficult to realise such a character as this. There are many examples of it before us. It is exhibited by all who do not feel their sin to be such as to exclude them from all fellowship with the Father, and the Son, and the Church of Christ, except through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus. Its essence lies in imagining themselves to be

“something when they are nothing,” in counting themselves reputable when they are vile, and in regarding themselves entitled to all Christian privileges when they are incapacitated for the enjoyment of any.

Of all such the apostle testifies “they deceive themselves.” They do not know their own real state and character. They have never entered into the depravity of their hearts, nor seen the ungodliness of their lives. In the spirit of pride and self-righteousness they reply to all faithful admonition, “are we blind also?” They are deceived by an imagination of their own excellence, while in reality they are dead in sin.

It is said of them farther, “the truth is not in them.” Its light may be all around them, but it has never penetrated to the inner man. It may be professed by the lip, but it has not entered within the heart. It is like the mainspring, complete in itself, but not inserted within the watch, so as to stimulate and direct its motions. They may have the form of godliness, but they deny its power.

Such was the condition of the church at Laodicea. “Thou sayest I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” It was therefore addressed, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.”

The same admonition and counsel are applicable to all who have not an adequate idea of their sinfulness, such an idea as to make them feel that their only hope is the blood of Christ. It matters not what may be the stage of their journey at which they suppose themselves to be arrived. If ever the time comes when they think of themselves otherwise than the publican did when he cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” they have fallen under a false and fatal delusion. At the

first they can come to God only as sinners, washed in the blood of atonement, and to the end it must be the same. The conviction of their sinfulness must abide with them. The doctrine of sinless perfection in man is contrary to Scripture, and experience, and fact. Those who dream of it may see a picture of themselves in the language of the apostle, which has not been sufficiently considered by them—"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

II. Another mark of those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ is their confession of sin. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There is a close and natural connection between conviction and confession. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "While I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue." If the heart be touched by a sense of sin it cannot be restrained from pouring forth the accents of humiliation. When the people were "cut to the heart" by the words of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, they cried out, "men and brethren what shall we do?" When the prodigal was made sensible of his folly and "came to himself," he returned to his father, saying, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." And David describes his exercises saying, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." Wherever there is conviction it will compel to the confession of sin.

What are the features of such confession? It is sincere, coming from the heart. It is full, no attempt being made to hide anything from God or ourselves. It is special, not satis-

fied with acknowledging sin generally, but noting special offences, and dwelling on their aggravations. It fills the mind with grief for sin. It rouses to the hatred of it. It constrains to an immediate and total abandonment of it. It is such as was exemplified by David when he poured out his heart before God, and cried, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins; for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me—hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities; create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

To such confession there is the most gracious encouragement in the text. And I have to solicit your earnest attention to the full and emphatic assurances of the verse before us. "If we confess our sins." This is all we are required to do. We are not sent on some toilsome pilgrimage, or subjected to some round of self-mortification. We are to come to God as we are—now—and with the whole burden of our sin upon our hearts. Alas! it is the simplicity of the exercise that is distasteful to us. We would be far better pleased to come with something beside our sins in our hand. It would be gratifying to flesh and blood to be able to lay our hand on some service, and say we have done this and suffered that. But it must not be. If we are to come at all, it must be in all our vileness, with a full heart and an open mouth, deeply convinced of sin and ready to own it.

Then God is "faithful to forgive us our sins." Is it not remarkable to find such an argument as this presented to us? It would not have surprised us to have been told God was merciful. We could have understood that. But how can the faithfulness of God do otherwise than inspire us with fear? It may well alarm the hardened and ungodly, but it encourages all who feel and confess their sin. The reason is that God has promised to accept them. He has said in His word "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose con-

fesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." It is not presumption, therefore, to expect pardon or confession. On the contrary it is distrust of God to doubt it. We dishonour His truth if we do not rely unhesitatingly on His promise. And that promise is—"If we confess our sins he is faithful to forgive."

There is even stronger language employed. The apostle says, "God is faithful and just to forgive." Just. This is intended to assure our hearts before him. It carries an argument with it that we ought not to be able to withstand. God has so ordered the way of pardon that we can put forward the plea of His own justice in seeking it. It is provided by the blood of Christ. "In him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus granted, God is just to His own word, for He has promised it. He is just to his Son, for He has engaged to Him to bestow it. He is just to His people, for they appear before Him in the name of Jesus. He is just to Himself, for He magnifies the riches of His grace, in harmony with all the perfections of His character. We are assured there is nothing in God to forbid, but everything to require forgiveness, when it is sought and received through the blood of Christ. Wondrous words! "Faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

And observe the gracious yet warning words that follow, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." They are designed to meet the jealousy of the awakened soul. We are taught that God will accompany His pardon with sanctifying grace. Our plan would be to put purity first and pardon next. But God's plan is the reverse. We are to accept pardon at once, and it will be accompanied and followed by holiness. While the blood of Christ removes the guilt, it renews the heart of the sinner. The forcible terms of the Scripture are, that "it purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." It does so reasonably. It fills the

mind with gratitude to God. It imparts to it a sense of His favour. It furnishes the most powerful motives to obedience. As it begins the life of godliness it upholds and increases it. "The life that we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God." Its influence will continue and grow until in death the power of sin is annihilated. And so the whole promise is verified—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It was this view of the confession of sin that led David to say, after he had exercised it—"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." As for himself he assumed that God forgave him. Great as was his sin he did not account it presumption to think so. He relied on the truth of God. As for others they would be encouraged by his example. And all who imitated him in his confession, should do so also in his sense of forgiveness. Try it and you shall find the proof in your happy experience.

III. To complete the subject, one thought is yet to be added. Conviction of sin and confession of sin must be followed by habitual penitence for sin. "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his truth is not in us."

Observe the difference between this verse and the eighth. There the expression is, "if we say we have no sin;" here it is, "if we say that we have not sinned." The former is in the present tense, the latter in the past. And there are two states of mind thus indicated. The former describes the condition of the man who does not feel his present sinfulness, the latter of him who justifies his past conduct. The former needs to be convinced of his sinfulness, the latter to be exercised aright about his past transgressions. In the one verse there is reference to the beginning of the divine life, in the

other to the maintenance of it. The one consists in the conviction which brings the sinner to the blood of Christ for salvation, the other in the habit of penitence which must accompany him as long as he lives.

Many examples of such an exercise appear in the history of the godly. David's sin oppressed him as long as he lived. There is a continual recurrence to it in his future writings. He knew God had forgiven it, yet he could not forget it. Paul also presents a similar example. "I am the least of the apostles, and am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of Christ."

Supposing this to be a just view of the subject, you observe the important doctrine to which we are conveyed. While we live, though pardoned through the blood of Christ, we are to remember former iniquities, and humble ourselves on account of them. It is both natural and profitable to do so. How natural that memory should recall the sins of our impenitent life, when it is said to us—"What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed; for the end of those things is death?" How profitable to remember them, that we may be at once humbled and warned—humbled for the past and warned for the future.

Let me exhort you to cultivate this habit. Many important ends are served by it. And we may briefly advert to some of them.

It will keep us mindful of what we once were, and of how much we are debtors to divine grace. Think what David must have felt when he prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy, remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord."

It will stimulate us to devote ourselves more unreservedly to God in the future. How powerful the appeal of the apostle, "The time past of our life may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasci-

viousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries."

It will promote watchfulness against temptation. We may well be exercised and say with the ancient church in her meditations, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

It will strengthen faith. Calling to mind how graciously God dealt with us in other days, we are encouraged to trust Him to the end. This was what David did when having complained, "My spirit is overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate," he added, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."

It will kindle repentance. Like Ephraim of old, it will lead us to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

It will promote holiness. We shall learn to acquiesce in the saying of the prophet, "Who is wise and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."

It will urge to perseverance. "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

All these exercises will arise out of the cultivation of a penitential spirit. No wonder, therefore, it is so powerfully enforced by the apostle in the text: "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

"We make him a liar." We resist the whole testimony of God. He has told us again and again what we are, and have done, and deserve. "We have sinned and come short of his glory." We must acquiesce in his word. Otherwise, "his

word is not in us." Its light has not shone into our understanding, nor its truth taken possession of our heart. It is to us a dead letter, and we have to learn its first principles. Let us view ourselves as God views us, and we must approve of the apostle's marks of a true believer—conviction of sin, confession, and penitence.

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LECTURE VII.

“ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : and he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—1 JOHN II. 1, 2.

THESE verses are remarkably full of instruction. They disclose the spirit of the writer—“ my little children ;” the design of his writings—“ that ye sin not ;” the faithfulness of his warning—“ if any man sin,” implying that any man may sin ; the duty and refuge of those who may be so overcome—“ we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ;” and the encouragement we have to make our suit to Him—“ he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” What a mass of valuable matter in a few simple words ! Let us consider the views here presented to us. And may God grant that we shall find them to be “ profitable for doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness.”

1. Notice the spirit of the apostle’s address conveyed by his salutation—“ My little children.”

Such words are felt to be peculiarly appropriate in him. They are suited to his character. He was gentle and loving. He had peculiar attractions even for our Lord Himself, and was known as “ the disciple whom Jesus loved.” We see

exemplified in him the "meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price." They are suited also to his age. He lived to be the oldest of all his companions in the apostolic ministry. His labours in both writing and preaching appear to have been continued in his old age. As was said of Moses it might be said of him, "His eye was not dim, nor his strength abated." It is a noble triumph of godliness when age is redolent with piety, and retains the earnestness and diligence of youth. John was one of those who might say, "I serve the Lord from my youth." We may be also assured his words were suited to the success of his ministry. Of those whom he addressed it might be presumed there were many whom he might regard as "his children" in the highest and best sense. He was their spiritual father. He might have adopted the words of Paul to the Corinthians, "I have begotten you through the gospel." Or, as that apostle said to Philemon, so might he, "Thou owest unto me even thine own self." Well might such a man speak as John does in the text, saying, "My little children."

In this there is an example to all who would be the teachers of others, whether pastors or parents, or any who would be their "helpers in Christ Jesus." It shows both the spirit in which they should labour, and the object at which they should aim. Their spirit should be affectionate, "Speaking the truth in love," ever "in meekness, instructing those who oppose themselves." And their object should be the conversion of souls. Everything else falls short of the design of the truth. Both may be fitly expressed in the language of Paul to the Galatians—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." It is when the word is thus spoken we may expect to find it accompanied by the Spirit and rendered successful.

2. The apostle expresses the design of his writings—"These things write I unto you that ye sin not."

His reference is manifestly to what he had written in the preceding chapter. And it is only necessary, for the illustration and confirmation of his remark, to look back on what he had written and see how fitted it was to discourage and destroy sin.

He opened with a most simple yet sublime description of the mediatorial person of the Saviour as "the word of life." He revealed Him "able to save to the uttermost," and declared that He had been manifested as the Author and Giver of "eternal life." If, then, such be the Saviour, and such His mission, what might be expected to be the results? Surely it is appropriately said of Him, "His name shall be called. Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins."

The knowledge of Christ and His mission, he next announces, is productive of two effects—fellowship and joy. It leads to fellowship with God as with a father, with the Son as a Saviour, and with the godly as brethren. In that fellowship is laid the foundation of the purest joy. So say the Scriptures. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Of such joy and friendship is it not natural to expect that the fruit shall be holiness? All these relations tend to secure it.

The apostle proceeds to show that it must be so, by placing in contact the character of God and those who hold fellowship with Him. How forcible are his words, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." A similar influence is also ascribed to fellowship with believers and with Christ. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The purifying influence of such fellowship is self-evident.

To these views is added a description of the divine life in the soul of the believer. It is characterized by the conviction of sin, the confession of it, and penitence for it. There must be conviction, for "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." Confession is equally necessary, for it is only to such as make it, the promise is given, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And repentance must ever be exercised, "for if we say we have not sinned we make God a liar, and his word is not in us." What then must be the effect of such exercises in the life? They will "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

Now, these were the views which the apostle had been unfolding. It is to them he refers when he says, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." The propriety of his appeal is obvious. Between such views and the indulgence of sin there is a complete contrariety. They cannot exist together. Either the doctrine of the apostle or the practice of sin must be abandoned. They are wholly incompatible with one another.

In this view he is not singular. Everywhere in the divine word, the gospel of Christ is represented to be "a doctrine which is according to godliness." It is well set forth by the Apostle Paul, in its great design and character, when he says, "the grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." We may well acquiesce in the prophetic description of the gospel church—"This is the law of the house; on the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy; be-

hold this is the law of the house." Our apostle, therefore, only falls in with the tenor of the whole inspired volume when he says, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

3. In full accordance with his own spirit and design, he proceedsto utter the words of warning—"If any man sin," implying that notwithstanding all he had said, "any man" might sin.

The man in the apostle's view is the believing man. It is of and to such he is speaking. He may sin. Alas! no proof is necessary. Both observation and experience are at hand to attest the melancholy fact. It may be very profitable, however, and fitted for warning, to consider whence it is that the liability of the believer to sin arises.

One source, then, is the remaining sinfulness of his nature. This is what is known in the Scriptures as indwelling sin. Of it the Apostle Paul speaks in his own case, saying—"I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O! wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are two natures in the believer, the old man and the new, the one the inheritance derived from our first parents, through the flesh, and the other the work of the Divine Spirit in the soul. Between these, there is, and will be, while life lasts, a ceaseless controversy. As the old man prevails there is sin, and as the new there is holiness. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other."

There is no doubt, also, that this tendency to sin in the believer is mightily strengthened by the temptation of the wicked one. His enmity is specially directed against the

godly. He takes the wicked captive at his pleasure, and they yield themselves without resistance to his power. They are, therefore, not conscious of his influence. His service is agreeable to them, and they are at ease, if not happy in it. It is different with the godly. They hate the dominion of Satan. They resist it. Yet he urges it without cessation. Witness the examples of Job and Peter. It is expressly said of the former that Satan sought and obtained a certain measure of power against him. And as to the latter, our Lord warned him, though it proved to be in vain, "Satan hath desired to have thee that he might sift thee as wheat." No doubt these verses are so distinctly recorded to teach us what we may expect, and to put us on our guard.

Nor must we omit to notice the extreme danger to which the believer is exposed from the world. It is through it our own evil hearts and Satan largely exercise their power. It has also temptations peculiar to itself. It is a rock on which many have made shipwreck. Its pleasures and honours and riches are dangerous in the extreme. But its people are the grand evil. Their flatteries and threats are plied with ceaseless effort. If they cannot beguile unstable souls they will try to affright them with terrors. Ridicule is a favourite weapon. And many who could face the cannon's mouth are unable to resist it. O! of how many might it be said, as the apostle said of some in his day, "They departed from me, having loved this present world."

In harmony with these views the divine life is described in the Scriptures as a constant warfare. The exhortation therefore is, "fight the good fight of faith." And this fight is to be maintained with the world, the devil, and the flesh.

It need scarcely be said how necessary it is to be vigilant in maintaining it. Great interests are at stake. The peace of the believer depends on it. See how it fared with David and Peter when they proved unfaithful. They were plunging

daggers into their own breast. The law is, that as sin enters, peace departs. The credit of religion, too, is bound up in the fidelity of those who profess it. Its severest wounds are those which are received in the house of its friends. It is a fearful thing to cause "the way of truth to be evil spoken of." Above all the honour of Christ is concerned. He is calumniated as the "minister of sin," when those who bear His name dishonour Him. The Scriptures, therefore, abound with warnings and entreaties addressed to our fears and hopes and interests. Paul says—"As my beloved sons, I warn you." And John reiterates the sentiment in the same spirit, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

Full well he knew, however, that in spite of all he could say, many would sin. And, therefore, he proceeds to declare as we shall now consider—

4. The duty and refuge of those who are overcome by temptation, and betrayed into sin—"If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

The peculiar view that is here given of Christ is suggestive at once of a great privilege and a corresponding responsibility. By considering these we learn the duty of the backslider.

The privilege arises out of the part which Christ acts as an "advocate." It supposes that we are accused, and that He appears for us, defends us, and maintains our cause. We are accused by Satan. We have sinned, and he demands sentence upon us and judgment against us as transgressors of the divine law. The representation given of the case of Job shows that this view is not fanciful. It is while he accuses, the great Intercessor undertakes our cause. And to see how He conducts it let us look into the example recorded in Zechariah iii. 1-5, "He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at His right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the

fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments." Observe how the advocate acted. He admitted the sin of his client, but he defended him on the ground that his sin was pardoned, and that a righteousness had been procured for him. The filthy garments were removed, and a change of raiment was substituted. The accusations of Satan were thus silenced.

Such is the believer's privilege, but let us not overlook the duty involved in it. We must bring our cause to our great advocate, and commit it to His hands. We must not say we have no sin. On the contrary, we must confess our sin. We must say we have sinned. And then we may be assured the divine intercessor will successfully plead our cause, remove the filthy garments, and put on us a change of raiment.

This is the duty of every sinner, and it is the duty of every backslider. Whenever we sin we must have recourse to this exercise. In no other way can this contracted sin be removed, or our peace be restored, or our purity, or our power.

Be persuaded, O backslider! neither to neglect nor delay this duty. Whenever conscience warns you, act upon it. Do like David. He says, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Return to Christ and to duty, and so you will return to joy and to holiness. And that you may be strengthened in this purpose and urged to act upon it, let us consider—

5. The encouragement held out to us to make our suit to our great advocate—"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

This is precisely what we need, and all we need, when we have sinned. Let us consider the words.

“He is the propitiation.” It is the word that is applied to the mercy-seat that covered the ark, which contained the law. As that mercy-seat covered the ark, so the blood and righteousness of Christ cover our sins and unworthiness. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (a propitiatory or mercy-seat) through faith in his blood.” This was David’s sentiment when he said, “blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Whenever we come to Christ our sins are covered by His atoning sacrifice, and we are accepted, because “found in him.”

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Why is this added, and what is its import? It is added for encouragement, and that encouragement is found in the terms employed. They meet all the jealousy of the soul that is awakened to a sense of its sin and danger. Especially they meet the backslider who is tempted to despair. Observe their force.

The apostle was addressing the believer, and he urges him to come to Christ. He is supposed to hesitate, as though he feared he would not be accepted. The apostle meets him with the assurance that in the blood of Christ there is enough to satisfy for the sins of the whole world. It is of infinite efficacy. Its merit never can be exhausted. There is therefore no reason for despair. Whatever be your sins, whether before conversion or after it, here is a fountain in which you may wash and be clean.

How completely this meets the case. The believer is tempted to think that, because he has sinned, he has been deceiving himself when he thought he was a child of God. This idea so occupies him that he only writes “bitter things against himself,” and makes no effort to return to God. The apostle takes him on his own ground. It is as if he said, be

it so ; admit you never were a child of God ; what then ? Why, I exhort you come now to the Saviour. If you never came before come now, and you will find that His blood is a propitiation not only for the sins of believers, but of all who will come to Him, whether they have been united in the fellowship of the Church, or have hitherto lived in the ways and wickedness of the world. None who come to Him shall be cast out.

Let the subject be viewed in this practical light. The terms have been subject of great controversy, and we must beware of being occupied with that to the neglect or loss of their practical design. It is contended by some they must be understood literally, and that Christ died in the same sense for every sinner, and atoned for all human guilt. To me it seems to be a fatal objection to this view, that if it be just, none can perish. If Christ has atoned for their sin they must be accepted. Rather let us remember none are saved by the atonement of Christ, unless they receive Him by faith. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." He died for all who believe in Him.

And O ! what encouragements are held out in such a passage as this, for all to come to Jesus.

It reminds us there is a sense in which all are benefited by His death. "He is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." "He tasted death for every man."

It reminds us there is merit in His death to save all who come to Him. "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth."

It reminds us all are invited. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

With such views let us be satisfied. And, avoiding unprofitable controversy, let us act on the text—"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

LECTURE VIII.

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected ; hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”—1 JOHN ii. 3-6.

TRUE to his purpose, the apostle again engages his readers in the duty of self-examination. He is not satisfied with the most full and repeated statements of the way of salvation, but labours continually to impress the necessity of a personal interest in it. He goes farther, and urges the importance of our knowing that we possess a saving interest in Christ. In the text he teaches believers to say, “we do know that we know him.” And this is his habitual style. The same expression is repeated many times in the course of the Epistle. And it is usually found in connection with some fresh evidence of a personal interest in salvation. It is observable that in the text it is used twice. Not only does he say, “we do know that we know him,” but he repeats, “we know that we are in him.” It is surely then both a duty and a privilege to seek this gracious attainment. And the text is designed to instruct us how we may gain it. It does so in two ways—1. By describing the blessed change which passes on the sinner when he becomes a partaker of salvation ; and,

2. By reciting various evidences of that change. Let us consider the subject under these two aspects. And may God grant that we shall all be found the subject of this change, and possess a happy assurance of it!

I. The great change is described.

For this purpose three phrases are used by the apostle in the verses that are before us. These are, "We know him—we are in him—and he abideth in him." In every verse he changes his representation of the subject. This very circumstance is both instructive and impressive. It shows its importance, and the deep concern of the apostle that it may be understood. If an object of great value is put into our hands, we examine it with the utmost care, we look at it on every side, we place it in every light, and we are not satisfied until we discover its many qualities and realize its worth and excellence. In like manner is the great subject of the work of grace in the human heart presented to our notice. It is exhibited under every form that may manifest its nature and importance. Let us notice particularly the three phrases employed by the apostle in the text.

1. "We know him."

It need scarcely be said it is Christ that is meant. It was of Him the apostle had been speaking. He had said, "he is the propitiation for our sins." And then he immediately adds, "hereby we do know that we know him."

Such manner of speech is very common in the Scriptures. Our Lord said, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And the Apostle Paul says for himself, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." The knowledge of Christ has thus become expressive of a personal and saving interest in His work and grace.

There is great propriety in this use of the term. Know-

ledge is the result of observation and experience. It implies certainty. If we say we know a man, it supposes we have had intercourse with him, and have proved him, what sort he is. If we know a country, we must have been there, and have seen it, and become versant with its inhabitants, and soil, and products. If we know a medicine, we must have used it, or analysed it, and so become acquainted with its constituents and properties. We know that bread is nutritive, because we have eaten it and found it to be so. We know that honey is sweet, because we have tasted it.

Now this is precisely the force of the term when we speak of the knowledge of Christ. It was so used by the Samaritans when they said to the woman who first told them of Christ, and on whose testimony it is said, "many believed on him," "now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." They knew it, because they had seen Him, and heard Him, and felt the power of His words. Thus also the Apostle Paul speaks of his own experience—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." He had committed his soul into the hands of his Saviour. He had put his salvation to the test, and found it to be all that had been testified of it. From what he had already experienced he could confidently trust Him for the future. His knowledge of Christ was the fruit of his experience.

Hence it is that the characteristic of believers in the text is "we know him." We know His power, for we have proved it; we know His wisdom, for we have been guided by it; we know His love, for we have enjoyed it; and we know His truth, for we have ever found Him faithful.

How thankful we should be this is the nature of true religion. It is not a speculation about which there is uncer-

tainty. It is not a doubtful opinion. It is knowledge. It is a reality of which we may have experience. They who have attained to it may say, "we know him."

2. "We are in him."

This expression is in full harmony with the former. It brings us into still closer communion with Christ. Not only are we brought to Him, to converse with Him, and receive from Him, and feel the power of His truth and grace; but we are made to dwell in Him, and find ourselves at home in the bosom of His love.

This union of the believer with Christ is the source of all the blessings of which he becomes the partaker by the knowledge of Him. Thus he is justified—"There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Thus he is sanctified—"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." Thus he is preserved—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Thus shall he at last be made sure of a glorious resurrection—"As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." In short, he may say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Once entered into the Ark, Noah was safe, and there all things were provided that were necessary for his preservation. The moment the man-slayer crossed the threshold of the city of refuge he was beyond the reach of the avenger of blood, and all he needed was laid up in store in the place of his habitation. These are emblems of the believer's safety in Christ. He is the ark in which he is borne across the troubled sea of life. He is the city in which he finds a refuge until all present calamities are overpast. He needs but one thing, to be able to say, "we are in him."

3. "He abideth in him."

Had Noah left the ark while the deluge continued, he must

have perished. If the man-slayer went out of the city of refuge, it was at the hazard of his life. When Shimei violated his pledge to Solomon, and passed beyond the bounds of Jerusalem, he brought upon himself the sentence of death. And so with the believer, it is essential to his safety that he shall abide in Christ.

How forcibly is this lesson taught by our Lord Himself, in one of His beautiful parables. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." He repeats the same sentiment, and uses the same illustration again to enforce it. "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing."

The believer knows how essential the maintenance of this union is for all the purposes of His salvation. "The just shall live by faith." If that divine principle ever lost its hold of its great object, Christ Jesus, the soul would be lost. Hence it is at once his duty and privilege to keep "looking unto Jesus." And hence all the ordinances are so constructed as to keep him in continual contact with the Lord Jesus. His life depends on union with Him.

Nor does he maintain this union merely on the ground of its necessity. Communion with Christ is his delight. He has tasted that the Lord is gracious. He can testify "to them that believe He is precious." He can truly say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on the earth whom I desire beside thee." He loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and therefore "he abideth in him."

Let me only add, the three expressions which have been considered as descriptive of the gracious change which takes place in the believer are closely connected with one another. He knows Christ. This knowledge inclines him to dwell in

Him. And having taken up his dwelling there, it is his purpose to abide in Him for ever.

What a simple, clear, and blessed view of the Christian's condition! Surely we may well ask, is it mine? Do I know Christ? Am I in Him? Do I abide in Him? None should be satisfied until they are enabled to reply in the affirmative. Let me therefore engage your attention farther while we consider—

II. The evidences of this gracious state as they are recited in the text.

These are equally clear with the description of that state. And it is observable that each feature in the description is accompanied by a corresponding evidence. We know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. We know that we are in Him, if we keep His word. And we know that we abide in Him, if we walk as He walked. The variety of the evidence is a testimony to the supreme importance of the enquiry. It is the will of God that we should faithfully examine ourselves by it. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." Let us then consider these three evidences of a gracious state.

1. "If we keep His commandments."

"By their fruits ye shall know them," "if ye love me, keep my commandments." Thus were the evidences of discipleship described by our Lord. He taught us how His people might be known by others. Then in the same way they ought to know themselves.

See an illustration of this evidence in the Apostle Paul. When Jesus revealed Himself to him, as he went to Damascus, his first cry was, "Who art thou, Lord?" And his second, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Whenever he

knew Christ he desired to obey Him. The light that shone upon him was an emblem of that which illuminated his understanding, and the voice that spoke to him was an emblem of the power that touched his heart. The consequences were apparent in His life. All men saw he was a servant of Christ by the change that passed on his conduct. And it was in the same way he was satisfied himself. Hence he says, "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

The same rule is applicable to others. To all who are in Christ the promise is made good, "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their hearts, and write it in their minds." Let this be done, and the law, so understood and loved, must be obeyed.

This result is essential. The habitual violation of the divine commandments is incompatible with union with Christ. On the contrary, if we are conscious that our aim and purpose are to obey them, and if our sincerity is proved by our conduct, we have so far satisfactory evidence of our discipleship.

This is not the only evidence ; but all others are vain without it. If it is wanted, every other is a mere pretence. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." And to all who delude themselves by conceits, unsupported by this evidence, the apostle testifies, "he that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him."

2. "Whoso keepeth His word."

There is a close and natural connexion between this evidence and the former. The word is the directory of the conduct. Whenever the knowledge of Christ has been ob-

tained, His word is obeyed exclusively and universally. Exclusively, for no other authority is admitted. "To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Universally, for whatever it forbids is avoided, and whatever it requires is done.

Great importance is attached to this conformity of the life to the written word. "In Him," says the apostle, "is the love of God perfected." He must be understood to speak of the principle of love in the heart. And the meaning is, that in obeying the counsels of the word, that love is carried forward to its perfection, in the obedience of the life. It is said of Abraham, "seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." In like manner, love is made perfect by conformity to the word.

What then is our treatment of the word? Do we love it, study it, and obey it? Let us give the answer and judge ourselves accordingly, keeping the words of James before us, "if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. "Hereby know we that we are in Him."

3. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked."

This evidence is the completion of the two former. It consists in the imitation of the example of Christ. In His deportment we see the best illustration of the meaning of the word, and of the conformity of our conduct to it. He exhibited in His own walk what He requires His followers to do, "leaving us an example that we should follow His steps."

How rich is the language of the Apostle Paul enjoining this example on the Ephesians, "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." He is to be always before us. The effort to be conformed to him is never to be abandoned. It must embrace alike His spirit and His conduct. And we must bear a nearer and nearer resemblance to Him. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Surely this is an evidence of discipleship, sufficiently plain to be understood by all. We readily perceive it in others, and why not in ourselves? Did we judge ourselves as impartially as we do others, we may know our state by the earnestness of our desire, and the sincerity of our purpose to have "the mind of Christ" and to "walk as he also walked."

It verily becomes us to determine this great question. Are we Christ's? Or are we not? Have we a good hope through grace, or have we not? We cannot suppose, after all God has done for us in His Son, that He has left us without light on this all-important concern. Our life is bound up in it. Is it reasonable to live ignorant and uncertain of our eternal destiny? We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. If we are wise, we will never rest until we are satisfied with our personal interest in the salvation of Christ. And it is to help us in such an inquiry, the text has been written, "hereby do we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." "Whoso keepeth His word in Him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby do we know that we are in Him." "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk, even as He walked."

LECTURE IX.

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in Him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.”—1 JOHN II. 7-11.

THE subject of these verses is well introduced by the salutation of “brethren.” The apostle had been discoursing on the principles and evidences of true godliness. Not satisfied, however, with a general statement, he introduces a particular subject, which at once entered into the essence and evidenced the existence of that godliness. This subject is brotherly love. And therefore, while it is cited as an illustration, it is appropriately introduced by the salutation of “brethren.”

At the outset it is important to ascertain what is meant by brotherly love. Does the apostle understand by a brother, every man, or only the believer? In looking carefully at the frequent recurrence of the term in this epistle, he seems to use it sometimes in the one sense, and again in the other. He does

not distinguish between the exercises of benevolence toward all men, and love toward the people of God. He regards them as emanations from the same gracious principle. Not that there is no real distinction between them. Such a distinction is clearly implied when it is said, "do good to all men, specially to them that are of the household of faith." But in treating of brotherly love as an evidence of union with Christ, the apostle does not limit himself by that distinction. He views it indiscriminately, sometimes in the one exercise and again in the other, as the same principle directed to different objects. And in the remarks now to be made upon it, we shall follow his example.

It is assumed that brotherly love is the apostle's topic in the several verses before us, and our object shall be to collect the views which he gives us of it. These are numerous. He denominates it "an old commandment," and yet "a new commandment." He declares that it has been exemplified in Christ and in all that are His. He represents its obligation to be great, considering the light of Christianity. And he enforces it by a strong denunciation of its violation, and a high commendation of its excellence. All these views are contained in the passage now before us, as I shall endeavour to illustrate.

1. Brotherly love is an old commandment. Ver. 7. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning."

This verse is often represented as though it referred to what the apostle had before said, and not to that which he was about to utter. To me it seems clear that he speaks by anticipation. And without arguing the correctness of this view, it must suffice to notice that he adopts a manner of writing which suggests the introduction of a new topic—"Brethren, I write (or am about to write) no new commandment." Be-

sides, brotherly love is a subject of which such a declaration might with great propriety be made.

In making it the apostle imitates the example of his beloved Master, when, in His memorable sermon on the Mount, He warned His hearers against supposing He was introducing any new doctrine. "Think not, says he, that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." It was the desire of both the great Teacher and His loving disciple to allay the prejudices of their hearers or readers, and to keep their minds open to conviction by preventing them from supposing that they were introducing some new doctrine.

There was good reason why the apostle made the same remark as his Master had made before him. It was true. Brotherly love was no novelty. It arose of necessity out of the relation in which men stood to God and to one another. He was their Creator and they were brethren. "God made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." As the children of God, created by His power, they were bound to love all the members of His great family. And as partakers of the same nature and the same hope they were laid under obligations to love one another. It is contrary to all the ideas we are capable of forming, to suppose that the children of the same family on earth are not bound to love their common parent, and in the same measure to love one another. And this thought is still more applicable to the family of mankind, and the relation of its members to God and one another.

This, therefore, is the view which has been put forth under all dispensations, and in every revelation of the Divine will. When one addressed the question to Christ, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great

commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Brotherly love was the doctrine of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Not only so, it was in both only the republication of the great law of nature. It arose out of the condition of man's being, as a rational and accountable creature, and could not be dispensed with as a bond of union among the children of men.

It need not be added how powerfully these views are enforced when men are regarded as the subjects of grace. They become thus doubly the children of God and brethren one of another. In the same measure the claims of brotherly love are increased. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Such a disposition arises of necessity out of his new nature. Well, therefore, might the apostle say of brotherly love, "I write no new commandment."

2. Yet there is a sense in which it is a new commandment. Ver. 8. "Again, a new commandment I write unto you."

The apostle delights to imitate his Master. He does so not only in his own conduct, but in his very manner of teaching. Of this there is an interesting example in the subject now before us. Of it Jesus said, "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is after this model John says of brotherly love, "a new commandment I write unto you."

How is this saying to be understood? In one sense it was an old commandment, and in another it was new. It was old, necessarily arising out of the relation of men to one another, and required by the oldest revelation of the Divine will. But it was also new, as it was republished under the Christian economy. The law of the Sabbath was as old as the creation, but when it had fallen into oblivion, and was re-

enacted in the Jewish law, it might be said to be new. So also when under Christianity it was made the memorial of redemption, as it had from the beginning been of the creation, it might again be said to be a new commandment. It is in the view of changes not less than these, affecting brotherly love, that it also is said to be new. It will suffice to notice a few of them.

It should be more intense than it ever had been. It was hereafter to be formed on the model of Christ's love. He loved us unto the death, and His followers should be prepared to endure any amount of suffering for the benefit of one another. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

It should be wider in extent as it should be deeper in feeling. Hitherto the Jew confined his regards to his own nation. The woman of Samaria used a proverb when she said, "The Jews have no dealing with the Samaritans." But in future all such national and sectarian distinctions were to be done away. The full tide of brotherly love welling up in the hearts of Christians should rise over all such barriers, and cover them with tokens of kindness. You know our Lord's answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?"—He that had mercy upon him.

It should be as high in its motives and aspirations as it was deep in feeling and wide in extent. Both would bring it into fellowship with heaven. Thence it would derive its motives, and thither it would bear its objects. It would be kindled by a flame from heaven, and it would burn higher and brighter till it ascended to heaven again.

Thus it should become the badge of the Christian economy. Judaism had been distinguished by its formal ceremonies, but Christianity would be distinguished by its generous and

enlarged catholicity. Taking hold of a few hearts, it would bind them together as one man. Thus united, they would operate on the mass of society around them. As they succeeded to influence them, the circle of holy love and active benevolence would be widened and extended. Families, nations, continents, the world, would at length be brought within the wide but warm embrace. "All nations shall be blessed in Christ, and all nations shall call him blessed." The world is to be subdued and governed by love.

Is not this a new commandment? And yet it is old. It is the old commandment dug up out of the depths in which it had been buried, and brought to shine with such lustre, as to attract, and enlighten, and cheer mankind.

3. Such love is a reality, and is exemplified in Christ and in them that are His. Ver. 8. "Which thing is true in him and in you."

Christ and His early disciples are meant. Let us look at the example which they exhibited.

As for Christ, His whole life was one burning flame of holy love. In love He left His Father's glory, and came on a mission of mercy to our earth. In love He assumed our nature and tabernacled among men. In love He spent a life of sorrows, and made himself acquainted with our griefs. In love He taught, and laboured, and suffered. In love He died for men and lay in the grave. In love He rose again, and went to prepare a place in heaven for His people. In love He appears in the presence of God for them, their advocate and intercessor. In love He will come again and take His people to Himself, that where He is there they may be also. And be it observed, all this is summed up by the apostle as an argument for brotherly love in us. He says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought

it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philip. ii. 4-11. If we have the mind of Christ, it is clear what that must be.

A similar account may be given of his early disciples. Like their Master, they denied themselves that they might benefit others. How incredible were the hardships endured by the apostles and the other preachers of the word, in order that they might put men in possession of the knowledge of Christ, and through it of eternal life? It was of no account in their eyes what they suffered, if only they had the reward of seeing souls saved. Nor was this spirit confined to the ministers of the word. Paul congratulates the Hebrews in these words, "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly while ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly while ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven an enduring substance." This was the spirit that pervaded the early church. No other could have sustained it in those days. It was full of the tenderest sympathy, the most ardent love, and the severest self-denial. The brotherly love that reigned in it constrained its enemies to say, "Behold how these Christians love one another." It should be so still, and then might it be said of us as of them, "Which thing is true in him and in you."

4. It ought to be so, considering the light we enjoy. Ver. 8. "Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

These two statements are eminently true, and lay us under a deep obligation to brotherly love.

"The darkness is past." What darkness? The darkness of Judaism is past. It served its purpose. But as the moon and stars disappear when the sun rises, so did Judaism when the sun of righteousness appeared in the horizon. The darkness of heathenism is past. The address of the prophet has been made to us. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." The darkness of unaided and perverted human reason is past. "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "The true light now shineth." The light of the word shineth, "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." The light of the Spirit shineth, so that "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." The light of ordinances now shineth, so that, as of old, of many places it may be said, "to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." The light of Christ shineth, so that it may be said to us, "while ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

These are our privileges. What then must be our responsibilities? Let us take for answer—

5. The apostle's enforcement of brotherly love by a strong denunciation of its violation, and a high commendation of its excellence.

The former he thus expresses in ver. 9 and 11, "he that

saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now; he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." These are strong sayings, and the repetition of them is deeply emphatic. The figure is easily apprehended. It is that of the blind man who, in the midst of light, is immersed in darkness, yet is compelled to prosecute his way, and knows not the obstacles he may encounter, or the dangers into which he may be precipitated. So it is with the man who indulges ill-will and hatred towards others. Be his professions what they may, he is in darkness, the darkness of nature and sin. He attempts to walk in his darkness, but he will not be able to find his way. He knoweth not whither he goeth, and will speedily be overthrown by the obstacles that lie in his path, or precipitated into unexpected ruin. "God shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate." Hatred has within itself the essence of misery, and entails unhappiness. It brings heavy punishments from without by its provocations and injuries. And it will bring down sooner or later the divine indignation, for it is written, "vengeance is mine, I will recompense, saith the Lord."

On the other hand, how high is the commendation of brotherly love. Ver. 10. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." His walk is consistent. It is in harmony with his profession. His actions recommend the truth which he professes with his lips. His walk is safe also. He casts no stumbling block in the way of others, nor does he raise any in his own. His own mind is calm and peaceful. Instead of provoking the hostility, he draws forth the sympathy and love of others. And while he pours forth the expression of his affection towards others, he will bring down the rich blessing of God upon himself. "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and

satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day ; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones ; and thou shalt be as a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

Nothing can be added to these views of brotherly love. Verily we may say with the apostle, "touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you : for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

LECTURE X.

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”—1 JOHN ii. 12-14.

OUR Lord has said, “who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” Assuredly we may reply, his own beloved disciple John was such a one. And in the text we are furnished with a proof and an example. He addresses himself to three classes, and gives appropriate counsel to each of them. He repeats and varies his instructions to make them more plain and impressive. These classes are little children, fathers, and young men, the component parts of each household, and of the whole family of man. Let us, therefore, consider them severally, and the separate counsels addressed to them, knowing these are no less necessary and suitable now than they were in the time of the apostle. And may the Lord guide us in seeking “rightly to divide the word of truth.”

1. The apostle addresses little children, saying in the 12th

verse, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake,"—and again, at the conclusion of the 13th verse, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."

In the 1st verse of this chapter it is manifest the apostle understands by little children, all true believers. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But the term does not appear to be so used in the passage now before us. It is a different one in the original in ver. 13, and not only is there this change of the word, but little children are distinguished from fathers and young men, so that it is clear a particular class are intended by the expression.

These "little children" may have been such in either years or attainments. Many who are far advanced in age may be only babes in Christ. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." And Peter exhorts those to whom he wrote, saying, "as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." All those therefore who are low and weak in their attainments, if they are only the subjects of saving grace, must be comprehended under the class of little children. Yet such of them as are at the same time young in years are pointedly and principally intended. Perhaps it may be properly said these form the generic class in the apostle's view, but others who do not surpass them in attainments, may attach themselves to them, whatever be their period of life, and consider themselves addressed in what is said to them.

What then is the address? It is twofold—"Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake, and ye have known the Father." How much is implied in these words!

Even little children need to be forgiven. They are sinful

by nature, and so soon as they discover any character, they manifest the prevalence of sinful passions and evil propensities. What a standing testimony to original sin is the administration of infant baptism?

If, however, they need pardon it is assumed they may obtain it. However weak their faith may be, it is effectual. Our Lord is careful to encourage the weakest faith. He speaks of it being as a grain of mustard seed. And he says, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

Nor is it to be overlooked how these little children are assumed to be in actual possession of forgiveness. "Your sins are forgiven you." They are truly subjects of Divine grace, as well as fathers or young men. It is not for us to limit the Holy One of Israel. We know that even infants may be partakers of salvation. It is recorded of both John the Baptist and the Prophet Jeremiah that they were filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb. These thoughts are well fitted to encourage and instruct parents, as well as urge them to seek the salvation of their children from their earliest years. Surely also they ought to be a solemn lesson to children themselves, who are reminded at once of their need of a Saviour, and of His readiness to accept them. He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Yet let not the ground on which they can be accepted be mistaken. "For his name's sake." It is not for their innocence they are received. It is not on account of any natural amiability they may manifest. They are held to be guilty and impure. It is only in the righteousness of Christ they find favour. Redeemed infants as well as others, will for ever sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever."

It is even supposed that little children may be the subjects,

of much religious experience. This is implied in the congratulation, "Ye have known the Father." They have had experimental knowledge of God as a Father. They have felt the power of His Spirit, and been begotten again in righteousness. They have had fellowship with Him, and learned to say, "Abba, Father." They have had much enjoyment in the word, and ordinances, and prayer. Often the religious attainments of little children have excited the admiration and surprise of those who have observed them. They have proved that God was their teacher and Saviour by the discovery of perceptions and dispositions far beyond their years, and which could properly be ascribed only to the sanctifying influence of the Divine Spirit.

Nor can we close this part of the subject without noticing the apostle's design in assuring these children of the pardon of their sins, and their saving knowledge of God. He does so in order to remind them of their obligations to live for His service and glory. This is the purport of his whole address. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." And he longs to see them walking worthy of their vocation. It is he who says in another place, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

And observe his double argument. "Your sins have been forgiven you"—therefore go and sin no more. Gratitude, love, and self-interest, conspire to claim your holiness. "Ye have known the Father," therefore act as obedient children, "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," and are able to testify that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all His paths are peace.

It is a blessed thing to see little children walking in the fear of God. It is in itself a glorious triumph of grace. And what a blessing to themselves and to others. It is the only preparation for a life of happiness to themselves and usefulness to others. They embark on the stormy sea of life with

a helm to guide them safely through its storms and perils. And guided thus they will arrive at last at the haven of eternal rest, with the rich treasure of their own redeemed souls and those of others who have made the journey with them. Well, therefore, might the aged apostle condescend to the notice of little children which has now been considered. It is, indeed, a sublime spectacle to see him stoop to be the instructor of babes. But it is alike in harmony with the soundest philosophy, the purest philanthropy, and true religion.

2. From little children the apostle proceeds to address himself to fathers—saying in v. 13, “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning,” and repeating the same words again in v. 14.

It is an appeal to their experience, and suggests much valuable reflection. “Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.” So they have often done. The aged Jacob has spoken, and what is the language of his experience? As to himself he says, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been in the house of my pilgrimage.” And as to God, he expresses his sentiment in the prayer for his grand-children, “the God which fed me all my life-long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.” David has declared his experience, saying, “I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” As for his son, Solomon, we have only to read the counsels of his age to the young in the book of Ecclesiastes. And how Paul tells us what time had done for him when he says—“I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Judging by these examples, how proper is the appeal of the aged apostle to those who, like himself, had become fathers in the church, in both years and attainments? "Ye have known him that is from the beginning." His language is that by which he describes the Saviour in the opening of the epistle. It is, therefore, as if he had addressed to them the inquiry, "What think ye of Christ?" They had tried him, they had trusted Him, they had done so long. What, then, had they to say of His service? Had they not found Him a good master? And in remembrance of all the way by which He had led them, what might He not now claim at their hands? He asks them to say, from their knowledge of Him, what service they should render to Him while life endured? Let us consider this question.

Surely they might be expected to be "clothed with humility." They had learned what they are, so vile, and what they are capable of doing, so little. The greater their experience of themselves, the more cause they must have seen for deep humiliation.

As they learned of themselves, so also might they be expected to grow in the knowledge of Christ. In Him they had found a counterpart to all their wants, and weakness, and sinfulness. It well became them to say with the apostle, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." They ought to be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

Their humility and faith should promote their patience. Seeing how little they deserved and how much they had received, they might well bear submissively the trials that were appointed them. They had seen enough in themselves and others to be well satisfied, if no afflictions beyond the ordinary calamities of life had been permitted to come upon them.

With these graces deadness to the world would naturally be

associated. They had found it a vain show. They could not but acquiesce in the sentence pronounced upon it by the wise man—"vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit."

Yet just as they were divorced from the world they might be expected to gather confidence in God. Many a time when cast down they had been lifted up. Their sorrows had sometimes been turned into joy. And good cause had been given them to learn the lesson—"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

It must be felt by all that these and similar graces are becoming in the fathers of the church. They are the natural fruits of sanctified experience. And if they have not been produced they have so far lived in vain.

Yet it is well to observe they are not found to be the characteristics of age, unless it is distinguished by piety. On the contrary, the very opposite evils are found where the Spirit is not. Pride, distrust, impatience, covetousness, are the sins of unsanctified old age.

How blessed when these have been overcome, and the opposite graces have been cherished. Truly, "the hoary head is a crown of glory when it is found in the way of righteousness." And this is just what the apostle sought when he made his appeal, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning."

3. He addresses himself to young men, saying, in ver. 13, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." And again, in ver. 14, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Nothing could be more appropriate than this address. It must commend itself to all.

Twice it notices "ye have overcome the wicked one." His mind is bent on their ruin. Let him gain the mastery of

their youth, and he reckons either on their premature death or a depraved age. He has many weapons with which he may contend against them. Their passions are warm, their appetites are strong, and their experience is little. He hopes therefore to make them an easy prey. Alas! with how many he succeeds. But not with all. By some he is overcome, and the apostle congratulates them on their victory. In spite of his resistance they have yielded to the heavenly demand, "my son, give me thine heart." Having yielded their hearts to God they have obtained dominion over themselves as well as Satan. Their passions are subdued, their appetites are denied, and their desires are moderated. It is true they need still to be watchful, but it is the easy watchfulness of the conqueror in the land of the enemy, who feels that greater is he who is for him, than any that can be brought against him. This is a noble spectacle, a young man triumphant over all the machinations of the wicked one.

Observe, then, how he is represented to gain this victory. "The word of God abideth in you." It is the same view long since expressed by David—"By what means shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." This is the weapon by which Timothy is said to have conquered, "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." That laid the foundation of all his excellence and usefulness. It was the same with our Lord. Every thrust of Satan was met and resisted by Him with a weapon from the armoury of the word. "It is written," was the announcement by which in every attempt he was overthrown. The same will be successful ever, because it is the sword of the Spirit. It is He who conquers by it in the mind of the assailed. But in order to this it must abide there. The word must be laid up in the understanding as a store-house, whence memory can draw it forth

as it is needed in the emergencies of life. It is the office of the Spirit to bring it up seasonably to the memory, but it cannot be remembered unless it has been learned. Its doctrines must be studied, its precepts considered, and its promises weighed. Then, in the fitting time, these will prove to be a well of living water in the soul, springing up in every emergency into everlasting life.

The consequence is therefore well expressed in the congratulation, "ye are strong." This is the characteristic state of the young man in Christ. He is strong in years, and his powers of both mind and body are well fitted for active service. His responsibility is therefore great. These powers must be employed for God and His cause, or they will not only be wasted, but perverted to evil. As they are vigorously employed they become more strong by the healthful exercise. The more they attempt the more they will find they are capable of accomplishing. Well, therefore, might the apostle address them, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Such, then, is the Christian household—little children, fathers, and young men. If we are members of it we must belong to one of these classes. Alas! how many there are who can be associated with none of them. Let us consider how is it with us. May we have grace to enter the hallowed circle, and receive the appropriate counsel.

LECTURE XI.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”—1 JOHN ii. 15-17.

IN the opening of this chapter the apostle announces the purpose of his epistle, saying, “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” To illustrate and enforce this purpose he states the general principles by which the character of the believer must be formed, and his conduct governed. He must “keep the commandments of God,” “keep his word,” and “walk even as Christ walked.” But the apostle does not rest in any general statements. He condescends to particulars. He demands the exercise of brotherly love. He calls upon Christians to walk worthy of their high vocation in the several conditions occupied by them, as little children, fathers, and young men. And now, in the text, he warns them against the love of the world.

It will serve to heighten the importance of the apostle’s counsels, if it is remembered that he is not merely giving them as rules for the direction of the conduct, but also as evidences of a personal interest in the salvation of the gospel. Without conformity to them we are not entitled to conclude that “we know” Christ, or that “we are in him” by faith.

As therefore we would have our evidences clear of a saving interest in Him, and would enjoy the assurance of a living faith, we must cultivate a close conformity to the manner of life enjoined by the apostle. Under this impression let us now consider the solemn warning to which he gives utterance in the text.

It may be viewed in two aspects. 1. The warning itself; and 2. The reasons of it. May the Lord enlighten us to apprehend the meaning of the one, and cause us to feel the force of the other.

I. The warning, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

It need scarcely be said that by the world we are here to understand, not the goodly fabric which God created, and which is still an object of deep interest as presenting countless evidences of the wisdom, goodness, and power of God, ruined though it has been by sin, but the pursuits, pleasures, habits, and whole "course of the world," as these are sought and followed by ungodly men. It is indeed a humiliating thought that the general term of "the world" should be employed to designate a condition of sinfulness. It implies that mankind are in a state of estrangement from God, and enmity to Him. Yet such is the scriptural representation. "Walking according to the course of this world," is the language used by the Apostle Paul to describe the condition of those who are "dead in trespasses and sins." It is thus the term must be understood when we are warned "not to love it, nor the things that are in it."

It may be said, Are we not required diligently to attend to the things of the world? And is not a promise of its enjoyment made to those who do so? This is true. The command is, "Look well to thy flocks and herds." One mark required of a disciple is, "Not slothful in business." And this is

among the promises, "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." We may value the world, we may seek to possess it, we may enjoy it. This is not what the apostle forbids. His words are, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," and we must take care that we rightly understand, and interpret, and obey them.

The true meaning of the injunction lies in the appropriate term used by the apostle, "Love not the world." This affection is supreme in whatever heart it dwells. It is jealous, and admits no rival. Its very nature is to make everything subordinate to the object on which it is set. A parent loves his child, and therefore he will do or bear whatever the interests of that child may demand. Toil is nothing. Trouble is nothing. Even life itself will be endangered if it be necessary. Let him see the life of his child in danger, and his impulse is at once to risk his own that he may save it. This is the nature of love, that it reigns in the heart, and must be obeyed as a master-principle.

Now let this view be applied to the subject before us, the love of the world, and it makes all plain. If a man loves the world, he gives it the first place in his heart, and everything is subordinated to it. The world then becomes his God, and he worships it. Whatever comes in competition with it is discarded. Whatever is necessary to the acquisition of it is done. It obtains a place to which it is in no way entitled. It becomes the object of a passion of which it is wholly unworthy.

Yet the love of the world is a principle fearfully prevalent among men. It is to be found in many who do not suspect it. And it may be profitable to go down from the general principle to a few special details, that we may detect its power where it may elude observation.

Here then is a man placed in a position where he may add

to his worldly substance. The way is plain before him, and he has only to pursue it and be enriched. But there is a difficulty. The law stares him in the face, "provide things honest in the sight of all men." He sees it, and respects it, and would like to keep it. But the prospect is tempting if he could only in some way compromise it. He tries to do so. He views the subject on various sides. He sees the benefits that will result if he can only gain his object. He sees the evils that will arise if he is disappointed. By degrees his principle of integrity is overcome, and he takes the golden bait, overcome by the love of the world.

Or to take another illustration, here is a man who would not knowingly violate the law of integrity. He too sees an opportunity of advancing his worldly interests. But there is a hindrance in his way. He is not sure that he can remove it, and respect the command, "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." He would not knowingly injure another, but this seems to be different from taking advantage of him. He is drawn aside from the path of honour by the deceitfulness of a mind under the power of self-interest, and he also falls, overcome by the love of the world.

To contemplate the same passion under another form, here is a man who has a great respect for the ordinances of religion and the word of God. The Sabbath comes, and he would like to remember it. But it has just so happened, that by an infraction of its sacredness he may advance his gains. Let him only occupy a portion of it in his daily calling, or let him but prosecute a journey, or only settle a few arrangements that may expedite the business of to-morrow, and the advantages will be somewhat. He would rather avoid the desecration. Still the case is urgent. It may not occur again. Let me venture this once. He makes the venture and falls, overcome by the love of the world.

One other illustration may be added. Here is a man who does respect the laws of integrity and honour, and devotion. But he is associated with another, who does not respect them. A case arises where both must act together. The former expresses his desire to act righteously. The other uses his influence to overcome what he denominates his scruples. He is afraid to offend him. His interests are too deeply involved to run so great a risk. He yields, and presents another example of a victim overcome by the love of the world.

These illustrations are sufficient to show how extensive may be the influence of the love of the world, even where it is not suspected. It is needless to cite examples from those who openly avow it. But taking both classes together, how many there are who live in subjection to this evil principle? Truly there was reason why the apostle should lift up his voice against it. The men of the world needed it, who were pursuing it to their own destruction. And the godly needed it lest they might be entangled by its delusions. It might come in so many forms, and prevail in so many ways, and inflict such disastrous consequences on their peace and progress, that the apostle could not forbear to warn them. He therefore called upon them in the language of the text, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," adding, as we shall now proceed to consider,

II. The reasons of the warning.

Of these, several are enumerated in the text, and we shall notice them in their order.

1. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The love of God and the love of the world are incompatible with one another, and cannot exist together in the same mind. This is precisely the sentiment of our Lord when He says in His sermon on the Mount, "no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love

the other ; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Each claims the mastery, and one of them must have it. Both cannot rule, because their counsels and commands are contrary. The one says this is right, and the other it is wrong. The one pronounces that to be lawful which the other declares to be unlawful. Their spirit and course are directly opposed. No one therefore can serve both. While these opposing masters claim the dominion, it is said to all, "choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Every one must be determined, either to resist the world when it goes contrary to the will of God, or to comply with the world even at the cost of disobeying God. It is hard to persuade men that these views are just. The great effort is to please both God and the world. But it is vain. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

2. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." This is the cause and explanation of the former reason. The world is sinful, and therefore its service is incompatible with that of God. This is again the very doctrine of Christ when He says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." The same is the doctrine of Paul—"the first man is of the earth, earthy." The tastes and habits of the world are the sinful results of a depraved nature, and are therefore entirely contrary to the will of God. This is proved by "all that is in the world" as its own natural fruit. And to be convinced that it is so, we have only to trace and test the apostle's summary.

He begins with "the lust of the flesh." What is it? The inspired Paul answers, "the works of the flesh are manifest ; which are these—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunken-

ness, revellings, and such like." It need not be asked if this master is contrary to God.

Next he names "the lust of the eye." What then pleases it? Vanity, empty show, finery, and folly. It were idle to ask if this is to be the master of a rational and immortal mind.

Last and worst, "the pride of life" is specified. It is seen in the pursuit of popularity—to have a name among men, to stand out distinguished above others. It may assume the serious form of the tyrant's ambition, or the low aspect of ruling over the little circle of menials and dependents. Shall this be the leading principle? God forbid.

These are all of the world, and not of the Father. The man who yields to them renounces the authority of God. He chooses a service ignoble beyond expression, and he forfeits the dignity of being a servant of the Lord.

3. All who do so should especially observe the third reason, "the world passeth away and the lust thereof." We are ourselves perishing, and so is all that is earthy. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Is it the riches of the world we seek and obtain? Hear the word of the Lord: "The sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat than it withereth the grass, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." Is it pleasure we pursue? The wise man has compared the laughter of fools to "the crackling of thorns under a pot." Is it honour? What a bubble; no sooner is it seized than it bursts. O! how just as well as forcible is the language of the divine Word announcing the destruction of the earth itself, and the use we should make of the solemn prospect—"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. See-

ing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" Surely if we are reasonable men we shall not live for a world that is destined thus to perish.

4. But to all this there is a glorious contrast in the last reason. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Blessed announcement! It is true in many ways. Such a man is the subject of principles that will endure through all the trials and vicissitudes of life. He is ever conqueror and more than conqueror through Him that loved us. He has an unerring guide in perplexity, and an exhaustless source of consolation in trouble. He will be borne unhurt through death itself. "The body returneth to the earth as it was, but the spirit to God that gave it." Death is to him the door of life. Beyond death he enters on his rich inheritance. It is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." There the high promises of eternal blessedness shall all be realized and enjoyed. The precious Word of truth shall be consummated in the experience of those who have embraced it, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

Surely in the light of these reasons the apostle might well exhort, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

His words ought to impress both the ungodly and the godly. To the ungodly they say that they are walking in a

vain show. They are living in a delusion. The world which they serve not only cannot serve them, but it will desert them in the hour of need, and all that they reckon upon as a glory and a comfort in it will become their tormentor. To the godly they say, that as they would enjoy God and religion, they must watch against a worldly spirit. Recollect the apostle is treating of the evidences of our interest in Christ. These cannot be clear or comfortable if we indulge a spirit of worldliness. "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Therefore, hearken to the text, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

LECTURE XII.

“ Little children, it is the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us : but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”—1 JOHN ii. 18, 19.

IT is a dangerous voyage which every Christian sails upon the sea of life. Sunken rocks, deceitful currents, and boisterous winds endanger his brittle bark. He needs constantly to beware that he makes not shipwreck of his faith. Hence proceeds the tone of warning in which he is habitually addressed in the Word of God. Our Lord has said, “ Watch ye : what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” And in like manner does the aged apostle utter the lessons of his own experience in the epistle on which we are now dwelling. In the last discourse we considered one warning, “ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,” and after explaining its import, we entered into the reasons by which it is enforced. In the present discourse we are called to consider another, the danger arising from the seduction of false teachers.

In the early Church these were the source of constant disquietude. Nor is it otherwise yet. It is melancholy to observe how little they are feared. Many trifle with them

as ignorant children do with sharp and dangerous weapons. We are therefore faithfully warned against them in the text, And in learning its lessons we cannot do better than simply follow its several clauses in a brief and simple exposition.

1. The apostle addresses himself to believers under the title of "little children."

There is a peculiar propriety in using such language to those who are warned. Little children need to be warned. They are ignorant and unsuspecting, because they are inexperienced. When they are tempted they possess little power of resistance. And once betrayed and overcome, they have neither the skill nor the power to deliver themselves out of the evils into which they have been betrayed. It is to be lamented that in all these respects many Christians bear a strong resemblance to little children. They know little of that world against which they would require to be constantly watchful. They are ill qualified to say with Paul of the devices of Satan, "We are not ignorant of them." Above all, they have little acquaintance with the deceitfulness of their own hearts and the power of their fleshly appetites. Such knowledge is the result of only much observation and experience. They might be addressed as Paul spoke to the Corinthians: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Without denying the sincerity or reality of their religion, they need to be exhorted, "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." They have faith, but it is weak. They are little children, and as such they need to be warned.

2. To these the apostle says, "It is the last time," and this is an appropriate introduction to the warning he was about to give them.

The meaning of the phrase will be seen by citing the parallel passage in Heb. i. 1, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." The last time is therefore the day of Christ. It is the age of Christianity. And there are two views in which it may be appropriately so denominated. It is the last economy viewed in its historical relation to those which have preceded it. The patriarchal, the Abrahamic, and the Mosaic dispensations, went before it in point of time, and prepared the way for it. It was the last. And it may be called so also in relation to the future. There will be no other economy. "Then cometh the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father." And this is a consideration of great practical importance. It is a high privilege that we live under an economy which is the completion, the perfection of all that went before it. But we must not forget we shall have no higher privileges than those which we now enjoy. If we are not saved by means of those we have, we must perish, for we shall have no more. Hence the solemn question, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And the unqualified assertion, "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Those whose attainments are not beyond those of little children would do well to attend to these representations. "It is the last time."

3. Thus introduced, the apostle begins to announce his warning, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come."

The very name is sufficient to awaken deep concern. We are at once given to understand that we must see a grand opponent to Him whom we delight to honour, and in whom is all our confidence. For His sake and our own, such an announcement should awaken our timely fear. As for him, we cannot doubt his ability to overcome every enemy. But

we may well fear for ourselves. His aim will be to deprive us of the blessings we enjoy by Christ, and it may well be a serious concern how we shall stand in the evil day. The name of our enemy is sufficient to indicate His nature and mission. He is antichrist, opposed to Him and all who shall adhere to Him.

The prediction of such an enemy may be found in all the Scriptures, but especially in the writings of Paul. "That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter time some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." It is to these and such predictions John refers in the text. They were well known in the church in his day. And as a familiar testimony he could remind his little children, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come."

Who is this antichrist? With the light poured on the question by the records of history, we can be at no loss to discern. The description will apply only to the papacy, and to that it does apply in the most minute and palpable manner. Assuredly that was the original from which the Spirit of God drew the picture in the passages that have been cited, and to which many similar might be added.

How important it is to have such a prediction! Many practical ends are served by it, and it is for this purpose especially we notice it at present.

It furnishes us with a great confirmation of the truth of Scripture. It serves the purpose of a fulfilled prophecy. In

the existence and character of the papacy we read a living comment on the truth of the Scriptures which foretold that thus it should be in the last time.

At the same time we are guarded against stumbling at this rock of offence. Had we not been forewarned of the appearing of antichrist, we might have been perplexed by it. But fore-warned we are fore-armed. Instead of our faith being weakened by his appearance and power, it is strengthened.

Nor let us overlook how we are put upon our guard against his wiles. "He would deceive, were it possible, the very elect." When we know that such an enemy is in the midst of us, seeking to pervert and destroy us, surely we ought to be watchful that we may not be betrayed from "the simplicity that is in Christ." "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come."

4. The apostle, however, comes closer to the case of those little children whom he addressed, and says, "Even now are there many antichrists."

Observe the distinction between this statement and the former one. The former is a prophecy, the latter is a fact. Antichrist shall come, but he has not yet been revealed. He who shall eminently bear that name has not yet come formally on the stage. Time will be required for his development. But there are other forms of evil and other seducers who exist now. You are not to imagine you are safe because the great antichrist has not yet appeared. There are enemies to your faith and holiness even now, and they are numerous and mighty. "There are even now many antichrists."

This is a subject of constant reference in the divine word. Paul said to the assembled elders at Ephesus, "I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." To Timothy he says, "the time will come when they will not

endure sound doctrine ; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears ; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables." And the language of Peter is fearful, "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Both Paul and Peter spoke of the future, but it was a future just at hand. In the signs of the times they saw the approach of these enemies. And in John's time they did appear. He lived to be the oldest of the apostles. He saw the fears of Paul and Peter verified. And although the grand apostacy had not yet come, there were many dangers to be encountered. "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come; and even now are there many antichrists."

It is to be observed that in the indications already appearing, the apostle saw the approach of the great antichrist. The leaven was working which would in time corrupt the mass of professors. So insidious and dangerous is error ; and so necessary it is to watch its first rise and destroy it at the bud. It may be said of error as of anger, that it is "as the letting out of water." See also how these evils began to work even in the presence and under the ministry of the apostles themselves. Paul said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." No human power can hinder the inroads of error and sin. We are amazed to read the records of the early Church and see how feeble was the resistance which even inspired apostles could give to the opposition of erroneous and ungodly men. Nothing could at any time preserve either the truth or the Church but the mighty power of God.

In our own day we may well cry with the apostles, "There are many antichrists." And who or what are they? Their

name is legion. They are all persons and things that are opposed to Christ and His people, and His cause. And how can they be enumerated? Infidelity is antichrist, and pours contempt upon the truth. The Papacy is antichrist, and perverts the truth. The scoffer is antichrist, and scorns the truth. All ungodly men are antichrists, and while they resist the truth themselves, they tempt others to deny it. All errorists are antichrists, and obscure and oppose the truth. We have a catalogue of antichrists from an inspired pen, when the apostle warns the Church through Timothy, saying, "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such turn away!" All these are antichrists. They were in the apostles' day, and they are in ours. Alas! so true it is that "there are many antichrists."

5. The apostle applies this announcement of many antichrists to a practical use, saying in the next clause, "whereby we know that it is the last time." The words amount to a declaration that this mighty host with all their enmity to the truth, should be a marked and prominent feature in the Christian era. This is a solemn truth, and demands our serious concern. It is well fitted to warn us of our danger. Never before were privileges so high, and consequently never before were responsibilities so great. Christianity is the best economy, and therefore it is the most hated and opposed by the wicked one. He raged against Christ in the days of His flesh, and John tells us, "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Is it not well to be thus put upon our guard?

We are at the same time instructed. We are given to understand what is the nature of the Christian life. It is to be in all cases a sore and bitter controversy. We must fight the good fight of faith with the world, and the devil, and the flesh. We should so live as to aim at being enabled to say in the end, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing."

Yet there is at the same time consolation in this truth. We become reconciled to what we know is unavoidable and necessary. We are persuaded it must be good when a wise and gracious God has so ordered it. And this is the very view that is given us in the Scriptures. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." It is the law of Christianity that as it is advanced in any person or in any place it shall in the same measure be resisted and opposed by the many antichrists who are only the agents of the great enemy of Christ and of His people. "Hereby we know that it is the last time."

6. We should beware that we are not found among these antichrists. And for our warning and guidance, a description of them is given in the 19th verse. Let us consider its several features.

"They went out from us." Once they belonged to the church of Christ. But they continued not. They became unstable. They were given to change. They apostatized from the faith and practice of the Gospel. Not that it is necessary to renounce the Christian name. All their changes and declensions may take place under continued and high

pretensions. Or they may renounce the name of Christ. In either case they are apostates from him.

"But they were not of us," adds the apostle. They never were. "They are not all Israel that are of Israel." They may have professed the faith, but in reality they had never embraced it. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Such they never were.

"For," says he, "had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." This is certain. The nature of the divine life makes it so. "The just shall live by faith." "They are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The power that keeps them makes it so. Saints are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The promise makes it so. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." If any draw back therefore from faith and holiness, they evidence that they only professed and did not possess them.

The apostle concludes, "But they went out, that they might be made manifest they were not all of us." On the whole, it was better they departed. It was better for themselves, that they might not be deceived by a name, but be led to penitence. It was better for others, that they might not be a burthen and hindrance to those with whom they were associated. And it was better for the cause of religion, that it might not be scandalized by their inconsistencies. "Thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert either cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

We may well conclude with the words of Paul in 2 Tim.

iii. 12-17, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

LECTURE XIII.

“Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”—1 JOHN ii. 20.

THE miner, who searches for precious metals in the bosom of the earth, can readily discern the spot where he may hope to labour with the prospect of success. When once he enters on the work, he prosecutes it with diligence, and is never satisfied till he finds the desired riches. And if he is led into a vein of precious ore, he follows it wherever it leads him, and returns to it again and again, until either it is exhausted, or he has accumulated all he is capable of enjoying.

It is so with the student of the scriptures. They contain truth more precious than gold. Wherever we enter into this mine of spiritual wealth our labour is well repaid: but there are some beds and veins of peculiar value; and when we discover and work them, our souls are singularly enriched with their precious treasures.

Of these the text is an example. Its simplicity is equalled only by its fulness. It is observable that the weightiest truths of scripture are usually expressed in the simplest terms. Witness our Lord's discourses, or the beginning of the Gospel according to John. So here, also, almost every word in the text is a monosyllable. Yet how deep its discoveries and divine its instructions! Let us then enter into this rich mine, and seek to possess ourselves of the wealth which it contains. And this we may hope to do, under the

divine blessing, by a few remarks naturally suggested by the position and language of the text.

1. First, then, it is observable that it contains an affirmation represented to be peculiarly descriptive of genuine believers. It had been said, in the previous verse, of mere professors, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for had they been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." They had been exposed to the temptations of false teachers, and did not endure the test. They were drawn away by the specious errors presented to them, and so evidenced they were not "rooted and grounded" in the truth. On the contrary, those whom the apostle commends in the text had remained firm in the midst of all attempts to seduce them from the faith. In opposition to those who had manifested their weakness and inconstancy, he says of them, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Let it be remembered this is a test to which the people of God are at all times brought. "There must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest." God is pleased to try our principles, that their reality and strength may be proved. He who remains "stedfast in the faith," affords evidence of being divinely taught; while he who is ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth discovers that he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

2. It is more important, however, to observe, in the second place, that the text accounts for this peculiarity of genuine believers, and teaches us both what it is and whence it arises. This is contained in the expression, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One." The terms at once suggest the work of the Spirit. He anoints the soul with His own grace. As of old, prophets, priests, and kings were officially set apart to

their duties by being anointed with oil, so the believer is spiritually called to all these offices by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He may say with Christ Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me." Every true Christian is the Lord's prophet, who knows His will, and makes it known to others; he is a priest, who has constant access to the divine presence by the blood of atonement; and he is a king, who maintains a controversy with his Lord's enemies, and acknowledges only His authority. There is, therefore, a rich and abundant provision made for his security and perseverance in faith and holiness. The Spirit dwells in him. He is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is this, and no mere purpose of his own will, that maintains his stedfastness. He is kept because he has "an unction from the Holy One."

It is doubtful whether we are to understand by "the Holy One" the Spirit himself who is given to the believer, or Christ by whom He is given. He is habitually known as the Holy Spirit, and both His own nature and His operations on the hearts and lives of men well entitle him to the appellation. Yet, on the other hand, He is represented to be the Spirit of Christ. He is the great gift which Christ was to confer upon the Church. In His exaltation the Saviour is revealed as dispensing this gift. "I beheld," saith John, "and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." It seems natural, therefore, to understand the "Holy One" of Christ. And we are thus presented with a most engaging and encouraging view of the truth. Jesus presides over His people, and confers His Spirit upon them as His gifts and graces may be required for either their own preservation or their faithfulness and efficiency to others. To obtain the Spirit

they have only to apply to Him. With the Psalmist they may plead, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, even the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." There is thus at hand a never-failing supply of grace to which they may continually come, and having "an unction from the Holy One," they may realize His gracious promise, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life."

3. But we now proceed, in the third place, to that which is most prominent in the text, and on which therefore we shall mainly dwell, the result of the "unction of the Holy One" in the experience and life of the believer—"Ye know all things."

It is with great appropriateness this effect of the indwelling of the Spirit is introduced here. It is as the best and only safeguard against error and those who seek to promote it. The believer is so under the influence of the Spirit, that error does not find ready entrance to his mind. His views, and feelings, and habits, are so contrary to it, that it meets a continual resistance in his spirit. It is only when he is off his guard, and becomes neglectful or unfaithful, that the wily enemy can obtain a lodgment in the citadel of his heart. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

"Ye know all things." This is a remarkable saying, and will need a full illustration. At first it may seem to be extravagant, and there is a sense in which it cannot be understood. In his highest attainments the believer is still under much darkness. Compared with what he hopes hereafter to obtain, he may truly say, "We know in part, we see through a glass darkly;" yet there is at the same time a sense in which he may be said to "know all things," and we proceed to inquire what it is.

We are all acquainted with the use and exercise of instinct in the lower creation. We take the animals that roam through the fields and forests in pursuit of their food and pleasure. They are placed in a luxuriant herbage, part of which would be to them poison and death, and other portions nutritious and necessary food. They do not usually fail to distinguish between them. They are not much in danger of mistaking the one for the other. However closely they may resemble one another, they can tell which they are to use and which they are to shun. Men, with all their sagacity, may err, but the untaught quadruped seldom hesitates or goes astray. His Creator has taught him, and in this department of His works he knows all things that he needs to know. If we go to the winged creation, they are instructed, not merely with what they are to regale themselves, but they know to perfection how to protect themselves and their offspring from the inclement season. What a mystery is the bird's nest, so exactly adapted to all the wants, and conveniences, and comforts of the creatures that construct and occupy it! Of the bee and its wise contrivances and prudent care, nothing need be said to those who know it well. Even the meanest insects are pointed out to man that he may learn from them lessons of wisdom. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." Of all these creatures there is a sense in which it may be truly said, "they know all things."

There is, however, another and a higher illustration to be found among men themselves. As there is instinct in the inferior creation, there is what may be called taste in the intellectual world. It is very diversified in different persons. Some have a powerful propensity for certain objects or engagements which are just as much disrelished by others. Take, for example, the fine arts, or any of the sciences. One

is enamoured with them from his youth, and another is indifferent to them, while neither can tell why it is so. But mark the readiness with which the former becomes a proficient in that which pleases him, and compare it with the difficulty which the latter finds it impossible to overcome. The one learns as if by intuition, while the other makes no progress. What is easy and plain to the one, is just as difficult and dark to the other. The one readily knows all things appertaining to his favourite study, and the other is only confounded and disheartened by all his attempts. Suppose the art of music. How soon and successfully it is gained where the taste for it is strong! How unavailing even the utmost diligence where this is wanted! Thus there is a sense in which it may be said of the natural taste with which God is pleased to endow us, it readily knows all things appertaining to the object of its interest and delight.

There is still another illustration of the same propensity of the human mind. Observe the effect of experience. In the various forms of handicraft or other engagements, whether mental or manual, the power of habit is remarkable. It has been well termed a second nature. Whatever relates to the accustomed exercise is perceived and understood at once. Practice, it is said, makes perfect. And thus experience becomes a teacher under whom we may be said to know all things.

Now let these illustrations be applied to the subject under consideration. The Holy Spirit visits the soul with His "unction." By His influence the mind is enlightened to apprehend the truth, the heart is sanctified through the belief of it, and the life is spent under the power of it. What is the consequence? The soul participates in the benefits of its own decided tastes and cherished habits. A sanctified instinct may be said to be formed in it by which it chooses what is good and refuses the evil. It does not need in every case

to pause, and reason, and consider. Without any such process, it feels instinctively what is the course to be either pursued or shunned. This heavenly taste is usually the best casuist. It is the product of an enlightened conscience. And the expression is not too strong when it is said of those who yield themselves to its habitual influence, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

"Ye know all things." We have endeavoured to illustrate how such a condition of mind may be understood and produced, but it may be well to enter into the subject more particularly. Such an affirmation cannot be understood absolutely or universally. There are countless subjects of which believers may be and are ignorant. Even of many things appertaining to their own favourite subjects of religion they may be very badly informed. The Apostle Paul tells almost all the churches to which he wrote that they were only babes in Christ. But there are certain subjects which they do and must know. There is a range of knowledge which their taste urges upon them, and their experience forces them to traverse. It is important, therefore, to inquire what this specific knowledge is, and what are its prominent topics and features—those of which it is said pointedly in the text, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

In the prosecution of this inquiry we shall be most safely guided by the context. We read at the 22nd verse, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Again at the 25th verse, "This is the promise he has promised us, even eternal life." And it is interesting to observe what the apostle adds in connexion with the assertion of these fundamental truths at the 27th verse, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need

not that any man teach you ; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." We are forced to conclude there are certain truths which the believer does and must know, and in which, if he would be saved, he must abide. Let us then inquire what these are, and under the light and guidance of that pole-star which we have found in the context we can scarcely err in the enumeration of them.

They are all based on the sinfulness of man. It is assumed that he is in a state of guilt, and danger, and depravity. He has broken the law of God, is exposed to His just and righteous displeasure, and is universally corrupted in his heart and life. He needs pardon for his sins, the renewal of his heart in righteousness, and a complete reformation of his whole life. This is a matter on which there can be no doubt or hesitancy in the mind of a true believer. No sophistry and no flattery can hide this truth from him, or cause him to deny it. "Behold, I am vile!" is his exclamation. The Spirit has shone into his heart, and cast light over his life, so that he has made discoveries of his own sinfulness which no argumentation can cover from his sight. He knows himself. He knows human nature. "There is none righteous, no not one." He and every man must come to God with the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." So far there can be no dubiety and no diversity of sentiment among all who are taught by the Spirit.

Their views, again, are equally harmonious regarding the Saviour, to whom they must look for deliverance. The utterance of the apostle on this subject is exceedingly impressive and explicit. "I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed ; and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." No

man who is taught by the Spirit will have low views of Christ, and no man can have correct views of Him, and views sufficiently elevated, unless he be taught by the Spirit. Our Lord Himself declared the great object of the Spirit would be to honour Him. "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." And the Apostle Paul has well exemplified the spirit of every believer toward Christ, saying, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." This high appreciation of Him applied to both His person and His offices. His personal glory is admitted to be divine. He is "God manifest in the flesh." No inferior Saviour, it is felt, could suffice. But He is accounted all-sufficient, "mighty to save." He is heard proclaiming, "look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else, a just God and a Saviour." His instructions as the great prophet of the Church, are confided in as certain and infallible. His atonement and intercession, as the only high priest, are held to be effectual and availing. And His dominion and authority, as King of Zion, are owned to be universal and supreme. From these views of Christ and His offices there is no departure among those who are taught of the Spirit. All such have proved by experience that He is "able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." They need no argument to prove it. They have found it to be true. Would you enter on an argument to prove to those who daily live upon it, that bread is nutritious? No more does the believer need to have it proved that Jesus, "the bread of life," is sufficient for him. And while the world may be filled with wranglings and angry controversies, it is enough for him to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am per-

suaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

The same remarks may be applied also to the believer's view of the salvation of Christ. It is viewed as mainly distinguished by two great features—fulness and freeness. It is full, and so seen to meet the entire case of the sinner. There is pardon for his guilt through the merit of His death, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" and there is purity of heart and life to meet both his original and actual sin, for the Spirit is given by Christ to regenerate the soul and to maintain and consummate His own work in it. "Ye are complete in him." At the same time this whole salvation is free. It is so free that nothing is demanded, nothing can be given, and nothing could be accepted for it. It is free as the air we breathe. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, Come; and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." On this view of salvation there can be no diversity of sentiment among those who have become partakers of it. It is subject of knowledge and not merely of opinion. They can all cordially join in the divine invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." O! taste and see that the Lord is good.

It need only be added that all who have "an unction from the Holy One," regard alike the present world and that which is to come. This subject is specially noticed in the context. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth

the will of God abideth for ever." "Abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming." The world is a vain show and must not be served. Its maxims and customs are no law for the believer's conduct. Eternity is all-important. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." This world is only the door that admits to the next. It is so accounted by all in whom is the Spirit. However different their attainments, yet are they all taught alike, and led by the same Spirit it may be said, "ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all these things."

In conclusion, let us be thankful that truth is known by experience, for this is the best safeguard against all attempts to wrest it from us. "If any man shall do my will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Let us cultivate fellowship in those great truths which are common to all believers, for in all that is fundamental they are still of one heart and one soul. Read the scriptures that express them together and you will probably agree. Let us exercise forbearance on all subjects of comparative unimportance, and on which there may be diversities of sentiment without injury to vital godliness. Phil. iii. 15, 16. And let us diligently cultivate the Spirit, for as His influence is vigorous in the soul, so shall we experience the blessedness of the truth in the text—"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

LECTURE XIV.

"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."—1 JOHN ii. 21-24.

YOU will observe that the second part of the 23d verse is printed in a manner different from the remainder of the passage. This form of letter is usually employed to indicate that there is nothing in the original language corresponding to that which is so expressed, but that it is added by the translators for the sake of more fully bringing out the meaning. In the present instance, however, such is not the design. It is intended to denote that doubts were entertained respecting the authenticity of that portion of the verse. The reason of the uncertainty was that in some of the early manuscripts of the scriptures this clause was not found. It is pleasant to find how careful the translators of our English Bible were to sift the evidence for every sentence that claimed to be of divine origin. We have our confidence in them thus greatly increased. In this case, however, they seem to have carried

their scrupulous jealousy too far. The clause is found in a very large number of the best manuscripts. Of late years the most distinguished scholars have expressed the fullest satisfaction with the evidence for its authenticity. There is reason to believe were the venerable translators to examine the subject now, with the light that has been cast upon it, they would not put any mark of doubtfulness on the passage in question. We shall therefore assume its authenticity in common with that of the entire passage, and so consider it.

A most instructive passage it is. The apostle states in verse 21 why he had written ; in verses 22 and 23, what, for substance, he had written ; and in verse 24, his object in so writing. Let us contemplate the subject under this threefold aspect. And may the entrance of the Word give us light.

I. Why the apostle had written, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth."

It does not follow from this statement that the apostle would not have written to those who were either ignorant of the truth or opposed to it. He understood well the original commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." To every sinner he would address the gospel of salvation, and entreat him to become a possessor of its benefits. Indeed, he did so in other writings. He was the author of the Book of Revelation ; and in it we find him addressing the invitations of the gospel to all men, saying, "The Spirit and bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him come, and take the water of life freely." On the present occasion, however, it was not to such he wrote. It was to them that knew the truth. He had special reasons for writing to them particularly. And it may be instructive to inquire what they were.

No doubt one reason was the extreme jealousy of the apostle lest any of those who knew the truth should act inconsistently with it. In another epistle he discovers the spirit that animated him in this respect. He says, "I rejoice greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." How it must have distressed him to have found some not walking in the truth. He therefore wrote to instruct, and warn, and encourage them that they might walk worthy of their high vocation.

Nor can it be supposed this was not needed. In the most enlightened there is still much ignorance. In the most determined there is still irresolution. In the most devoted there is still deficiency. There is therefore necessity for line upon line, and precept upon precept. The experience of the aged apostle had shown him how many dangers and defects encompassed the most advanced believers, and how needful it was ever to address to them the word of exhortation.

But his great reason appears to have been his hope of success in writing to such. It was to this he must have alluded in the verse that is now before us. He declared the truth to them, encouraged by the belief that there would be found in them a readiness of mind to receive it. He warned them against error, in the assured confidence they would, like himself, nauseate and reject it. Such was their sanctified taste, that no sooner was the truth presented than they perceived its meaning, and rejoiced in its discovery ; and for the same reason, error needed only to be exposed that it might be refused.

In this assumption of the apostle there is a practical lesson of great value. We are taught that the acceptance or rejection of the truth is chiefly dependent on the disposition of the heart towards it. It is true, sufficient evidence must in every case accompany it. But if the heart be right, the mind

perceives the force of evidence with much clearness ; while, if it be indisposed, no amount of evidence will satisfy. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light ; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." It is testified of the Bereans, "these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." There is a proverb, founded, as most of our common sayings are, in truth, that it is hard to persuade a man against his will. It is the perversity of the will that often blinds the understanding. Let that be rightly disposed, and we are apt to see clearly. And that is simply the apostle's principle in the text—"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth."

II. What, then, let us inquire in the second place, did he write? The reply is in the next two verses, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-christ that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father ; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."

It is observable that, in treating of truth and error, the whole subject of the apostle is concerning Jesus Christ. He assumes that if our views of Him are correct, so will be our apprehension of the whole circle of truth ; but that if they be erroneous, we shall not rightly perceive any other truth. Christ is eminently the truth. He that knows Him knows all things, and he that knows Him not knows nothing as he ought to know it.

The apostle therefore goes largely into the subject. His words are few and simple, but they are weighty and comprehensive. He presents the Saviour in various views of supreme importance, in which it is vital to true godliness

that we shall perceive the truth and not fall into error. We shall endeavour to unfold what these views are.

1. The first is adverted to in the opening of the 22d verse. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"

No doubt the general sentiment here is the rejection of the claims of Jesus Christ to be the Messiah promised in the scriptures of the Old Testament. This was the sin of the Jewish nation. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." In so acting, they sinned against the clearest evidence and the fullest light. All the marks of the promised Messiah might have been seen in Christ had not their minds been blinded by prejudice and worldliness. He was the light, but they could not see it, because their eyes were blinded.

This view, however, does not express the full doctrine of the apostle. It is very comprehensive, and needs to be deeply examined. To receive or reject Jesus as the Christ has respect to all His offices, and consequently to all the blessings which we may obtain or forfeit by embracing or refusing Him in them.

Rightly to apprehend the sentiment of the apostle, let us consider what is implied in the term Christ. It means strictly anointed, and raises the question, for what was He anointed? Under the law, prophets, priests, and kings were set apart to their several offices by being anointed with oil. In this respect they were emblematic of the Saviour, who said of himself, "The Spirit of the Lord was upon me, because He hath anointed me." The Spirit anointed Him to be the prophet, priest, and king of the Church. And it is to designate Him as bearing these offices He is called Christ.

Keeping this view before us, we perceive the meaning of the apostle's definition of antichrist as one who "denieth that Jesus is the Christ." He rejects or does not accept Him in one or all of these offices, and so subjects himself to that

condemnation. It may be profitable to offer a remark on each of these views.

He is antichrist who does not accept of Jesus as the prophet of the church. He is the great and infallible Teacher. His mind is declared in the written word. If any man, therefore, refuses obedience to the word, it is counted disobedience to Christ. He resists Him "in whom are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is antichrist.

The same observation may be made in relation to His priestly office. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus—By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified—He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Does any man therefore come to God in any other name? Does he trust in any other ground of acceptance, whether it be his own imagined innocence or righteousness, his sufferings or his offerings, anything he can do or others can do for him? Does he put his prayers into any other censer than that of Jesus? Whoever so acts rejects Christ as his great, meritorious, and prevalent high priest. He is antichrist.

So also with the kingly office. Christ only has a claim to command and be obeyed. He said, "One is your master, even Christ; and call no man your father upon the earth." Does any man therefore yield obedience to another, whose command is contrary to the will of Christ? He rejects Him in His kingly office. He is antichrist.

It is well to look at the subject in this comprehensive light. No doubt the Scriptures point to some special antichrists as more marked and aggravated than others. It is impossible to overlook that the papacy is most distinctly described as such. Yet let us not deceive ourselves. It is to be feared the test which we have just applied will discover many to be themselves antichrist, who have been accustomed to point the finger of scorn at another antichrist.

2. This is not all. In the same verse now under consideration the apostle gives another description, and says, "He is antichrist that denies the Father and the Son." Let us inquire into this view.

It cannot mean a denial of the existence of the Father and the Son as two distinct beings, the one dwelling in heaven, and the other upon the earth. The reference is manifestly to some union between them which some might be disposed or tempted to deny. Nor have we far to go to discover what that union is. It is stated by the apostle to be that of Father and Son. Yet this cannot mean merely the relation of father and son as that exists between God and angels, or between God and men. There must have been some peculiar relation in the mind of the apostle. It is that in which Christ is called God's "own Son," His "only-begotten and well-beloved Son." In this relation the Son is the equal of the Father. The Jews understood Him to claim that equality when He called Himself the Son of God, and so charged Him with blasphemy and proceeded to stone Him. It is that of which our Lord often spoke, saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me. I and my Father are one." He does not hesitate to say, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

Now, is it not a fair inference from these views that the scriptures claim divine honours for the Son of God? And if so, does not the apostle declare him to be antichrist who refuses to render them? Assuredly He is entitled to them. The divine names are all applied to Him. Divine perfections are attributed to Him. Divine works are ascribed to Him.

Divine worship is paid to Him. He, therefore, is antichrist who does not own His divinity.'

And let it be remembered He is represented in this high character, and these honours are claimed for Him as our Saviour. It is for our good as well as for His glory the apostle contends for His honour. Let us give Him the glory that is due by hearkening to His invitation, "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth ; for I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour."

3. The apostle gives one other view of antichrist in verse 23—"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father ; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." There are two deeply important sentiments in these words, which can only be noticed.

The one is that no one can have just views of God unless He is known as He is revealed in the Son. This is what our Lord refers to when He says, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." "God in Christ" is the true God ; and he only who so discerns Him can say, "We joy in God." He who worships any other may be addressed, "Ye know not what ye worship."

The other sentiment is the result of the first. He only who knows God in His Son can have fellowship with Him. This seems to be the force of the phrase, he "hath the Father." He can come to Him. He can take hold of Him. He can walk with Him. He can enjoy Him. He can say of Him, "This God is our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide even unto death."

You see how our privileges are bound up in right apprehensions of Christ. It is to maintain these, as well as to assert His honour, the apostle unfolds the forms in which antichrist may appear. They are indeed united in the

counsels and purposes of God. And happy is he who unites them in his own experience.

III. This will more fully appear while we notice the object of the apostle in writing as he had done. It is thus expressed in the 24th verse—"Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father."

The three terms, "abide," "remain," "continue," are the same in the original. The repetition is sufficient to show the extreme importance attached to the thought by the apostle. To secure it was the design of all the earnest argumentation and varied illustration which he employed. What, then, is it?

It is suggested by a phrase which he uses again and again throughout the epistle, "The truth is not in us." In order that the truth may have its due effect, it must be in us, not as a speculation in the head, but a mighty practical principle in the heart. It must be in us as food is in the man whom it nourishes. It must be incorporated with our whole system, enlightening the understanding, subduing the will, purifying the affections, controlling the conduct. It must occupy and fill the heart as the seat and fountain of life, whence the streams of thought, and speech, and action are ever flowing.

But it is not merely the truth, as a system, that must thus dwell in us. It is as the casket that contains the jewel; and that jewel is Christ. It is thus twice identified with Him in the verse that is now before us—"Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you." But does not the epistle open with this account of Christ—"That which was from the beginning—the Word of life—declare we unto you." The meaning, therefore, is that we shall be careful to abide in Christ, or to have Him abiding in us. It is to obey

His own words, "Abide in me, and I in you ; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." It is that we may do as the apostle did when he saith, "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

And when we thus abide in Christ, trusting in His wisdom to guide, His power to support, His grace to pardon and purify us, how blessed the consequences. Then, says the apostle, "Ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." In fellowship you shall have all they can confer. The Son will confer on you all the blessings of His salvation. The Father will confer on you all the blessings of children. As you maintain this union and communion, you may cry, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." God grant you may prove it to be so in your happy experience.

LECTURE XV.

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”—1 JOHN ii. 25.

THERE is great variety in the style of instruction in this epistle. Sometimes the apostle lays down general and comprehensive principles, and at other times he has recourse to the most minute explanations and illustrations. Of the former there is an example in the first chapter, and the latter almost entirely, though not exclusively, occupy the second. Everything is said that can possibly either unfold or enforce the great subject discussed, true godliness and its evidences. “There is line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” All things are done for edification. At present our attention is to be occupied with one of those general statements that comprehend the grand features of the gospel of Christ. It is like others of the same class announced by this apostle, so simple that a child may apprehend it, and yet so profound that it can neither be fathomed nor exhausted. “This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”

In considering this statement, let us notice, 1. The blessing promised, “eternal life;” and 2. What is implied in its being represented as a promise. May God open our minds to apprehend it, and incline our hearts to receive it!

I. Consider the blessing promised—“eternal life.”

Life is used as the illustration, because of all blessings it is

the most desired, and eternal is appended to it, because that is the highest and best form of life. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life."

In one view, this eternal life is a present blessing, and in another it is to be realized only in eternity. It is begun here, and consummated there. Here it takes the form of grace, there of glory. It is possessed now as the acorn contains the oak, or as the man is in the child, or the plant or flower is contained in the seed. It is only then, however, it is fully developed. Yet it is most important to be remembered that it must be begun in time. If not, it can never be consummated in eternity. If there be not life imparted to the soul in the present world, it can have no existence in that which is to come. Under the solemn impression of this thought, let us then inquire in what eternal life consists, as relates to both time and eternity.

1. The first great element in eternal life is freedom from condemnation. So taught our Saviour himself. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." He declares it to be a present attainment—"he hath it;" and he makes it to consist in deliverance from condemnation—"he shall not come into it." The sentence of death that lay upon him is removed, and that of life is pronounced. As the criminal who has been tried, found guilty, condemned, and had the sentence of death pronounced upon him, is afterwards freely pardoned by his offended sovereign, and restored to life under his protection, so the sinner, on whom the law has passed sentence of death, is freely pardoned by his gracious judge, and restored to the security of life. This pardon is in a sense already eternal. The sentence is irreversible. Once passed it is never recalled. It was purposed in eternity, and

shall be made good in eternity. This is the common heritage of all the people of the Lord, and hence it is written, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie promised before the world began; but hath in due time manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour."

2. Another element of eternal life is the renewal of the heart in righteousness by the grace of the divine Spirit. There is a double death in the sinner in this present life, and there is a double life corresponding to it. He is dead under the sentence of the law, and also under the power of sin. The former is removed when he is forgiven, the latter when he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. He is then "born again." This is the figure which our Lord employs to describe the spiritual change. His apostle calls it a new creation. It restores all the powers of the soul to their original and proper exercises. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The eyes are opened to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The ears are unstopped to hear His voice in the word. His tongue is unloosed to speak with God in prayer and for him to men. His heart has the power of life infused into it. The man is made "alive unto God." He is so made alive that he can never die. "He is born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The Spirit who begins the work in the soul abides in it to maintain and perfect it. "Saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." In the confidence of security the believer, confiding in the grace that has made him alive, may boldly challenge all the ene-

mies that would again bring him under the power of death, saying with an apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that loved us." The divine life in the soul, as well from its own nature as its almighty preserver, cannot die. And in this it is even now eternal.

3. It is in eternity, however, it shall be consummated. The principles by which it is now produced and maintained shall then be perfected. Faith shall be turned into sight and hope shall become fruition. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity." And mark the reason why it is declared to be the greatest. "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part: but then shall I know even as also I am known." This, therefore, is the great blessedness ever presented to the hope of the godly. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Holiness will then be perfect, and consequently so also will happiness. "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." In this glorious prospect it is we are taught to triumph and say with the apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved

in heaven for you." This is that eternal life proclaimed in the text. Let us now proceed and consider—

II. What is implied in its being represented as a promise. "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

There is a strong emphasis in these words. The repetition of the terms is no doubt intended to arrest attention. It is not merely "the promise," but "the promise which he hath promised us." Let us inquire into the import of such a representation.

1. If eternal life be a promise, this implies that it is a free gift.

In this view it is habitually presented in the Scriptures. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." It would be impossible to convey in any terms more fully, or emphatically, or earnestly the idea of eternal life being imparted to men as a free gift. This much is indeed implied in the very idea of a promise. It supposes that the party promising is not under any obligation to grant, or the party promised in a condition to claim, the favour. A promise is, in the very nature of it, gratuitous, and may be given or withheld. This applies to all the blessings contained in eternal life. The pardon of sin cannot be claimed on the ground of anything in the sinner. If ever it is enjoyed it must be received as a free gift. The same is true of the renewal of the heart in righteousness. As pardon is freely given and received, so also must the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to change the heart. And if ever any sinner is admitted

to the blessedness of heaven, its gates cannot be opened on the ground of any worthiness found in him, but only through the free and undeserved grace of God in Jesus Christ.

This is the argument so powerfully addressed to the Galatians by the Apostle Paul. He says, "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise : but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid : for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

There is necessity for all this urgency and argumentation. Strange as it may seem, and unreasonable and mad as it may be, the sinner is unwilling to accept of eternal life as a free gift. It offends his pride. He would purchase it. He would suffer for it, or obey for it, or give some consideration for it. But to receive it gratuitously, this goes against his whole nature, and he will never submit to it until he is constrained by divine grace.

O foolish and unwise, be persuaded to hear the gracious invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye ; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Accept eternal life, its pardon, and purity, and blessedness, and while you are thus saved, God will be glorified by your acceptance of the gift.

2. This thought, however, suggests a second remark. While a promise supposes a free gift on the part of God, it implies its acceptance on our part. If it be not accepted it can never be enjoyed. It becomes, therefore, an important inquiry, How is this great promise to be accepted ?

It is true, and never to be forgotten, that the promise of eternal life is absolutely unconditional. There are no terms.

It is simply receive the gift and have it. Yet the very act of receiving involves certain exercises of mind. Our inquiry is, What are these exercises? And the least reflection will show there are three which are indispensable.

There must be repentance. If any one will receive pardon he must be sensible of his sin. His desire must be to have its heavy burden removed from him. In the nature of the case he cannot come into the possession of pardon without this exercise. Hence its necessity is declared in the most unequivocal terms, "Except ye repent ye shall perish." And the same remark may be made of the other constituents of eternal life.

So also there must be faith. The pauper cannot possess the alms presented to him, unless he shall put forth his hand to receive it. No more can the sinner be a partaker of eternal life, without the act of receiving it gratuitously at the hand of God. It is by faith he does so. In its exercise he sees his need of the gift, its suitableness for him, its freeness, and so he accepts it. He says, "Lord, I believe." And in so doing he embraces Jesus Christ, and eternal life in Him.

These exercises are followed of necessity by obedience. If we are penitent we must hate sin. If we have faith we must rejoice in Him who saves from it. And if we are saved from it we must be holy. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

There is therefore no danger lest the gratuitous salvation of the gospel should encourage us in sin. While it is free as an unconditional and undeserved gift, it is yet sanctifying. How the apostle unites these views, saying to Titus, "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the wash-

ing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

3. If eternal life be the promise of God it is sure. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

It is deeply interesting to observe how this unchanging faithfulness of God is represented to guarantee all the blessings of eternal life to those who are willing to accept them. The apostle speaks of the "covenant of promise." The promise is put into the form of covenant, that we may be the more assured of its certainty. And the manner in which he unfolds and reasons upon this idea is truly surprising. He says, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us." He gave His promise, but as if that were not enough, He has added His oath, that nothing might be wanted to complete the consolation of those who confided in His covenant.

What effect ought such a view of the subject to have upon us? It is written of Abraham that he "was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform." Surely then it ought to be the same with us. He has done every thing that was possible to assure our hearts.

And let it be remembered this is a view of the subject which ought to exercise a most extensive influence over our lives. There are promises addressed and adapted to us in

all possible conditions. There is the promise of guidance in perplexity, of strength in weakness, of consolation in sorrow, of grace in life, and support in death. Nothing has been omitted in all the varieties of our exercises, and duties, and feelings. Still there is a promise to meet the case. We have only to seek it out, to lay our hand upon it, to plead it and say, "Do as Thou hast said." It is sure, and the more we rely upon it, the more honour do we give to Him who has given it. We should seek to remember the word of James, and apply it to the promises, "Let him ask of God and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

4. Finally, since eternal life is the promise of God, it ought to exercise a powerful influence over us, in engaging us wholly for Him, who has so provided for us.

This thought is set forth with great power by more than one apostle. Peter speaks thus, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Such he reckoned should be the influence of the promises. And therefore he adds, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge: and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 5-8. Paul views the subject in the same light. He

says, "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Surely this ought to be the effect of the promises. Gratitude to him who has given them should so influence us. The conscious happiness with which their enjoyment inspires us, should thus affect us. And above all, the hope which they set before us should transport us beyond the world, and sin, and self, and elevate us to heaven, with its anticipated holiness, and blessedness, and glory. So will it be with all who truly receive the doctrine of the text, "this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life."

LECTURE XVI.

“These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”—1 JOHN ii. 26-28.

DAILY bread is necessary for the sustenance of life. The food of which we partake to-day must be repeated to-morrow. We do not nauseate it because we have been accustomed to it. On the contrary the experience of its efficacy in past time encourages us to desire it for the future. And as long as we live we must eat and eat again, as well to satisfy the cravings of appetite as to nourish this mortal body.

It is the same with the mind. It must be fed from day to day with living bread. The same spiritual food must continue to be taken. The more it has contributed to the nourishment of our souls in former times the more it will be desired in time to come. “Blessed are they who so hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.”

Thus it is we are to account for the reiteration of the same truths in the word of God. The gospel is one. By it alone can “the soul be in health and prosper.” If ever we become

satiated with it, the cause must be the inroad of disease upon the mind. The healthy soul never can have enough of "Christ and him crucified."

We return, therefore, with fresh zest to the Apostle's representation of this unchanging theme in the verses that are before us. In the 26th He insinuates the danger of those to whom he wrote ; in the 27th he reminds them wherein their safety lay ; in the 28th he urges them to the duty necessary to their safety ; and in the latter part of the same verse he urges upon them reasons and motives for the performance of this duty. Let us consider these views. And may the Lord enable us to act upon them !

I. The danger. "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." Ver. 26.

The term employed by the Apostle is most significant of danger—"seduce you." Those to whom he refers would come to the disciples, not as open enemies, but as professed friends. Did they come under the former aspect there would be an immediate and stern resistance. Preparation would be made to ward off the attack. But coming in the latter they would not be suspected. The objects of their seduction would be off their guard. And there would be the hope of making them an easy prey.

The history of the church furnishes a melancholy illustration and confirmation of these remarks. "Satan beguiled Eve through his subtlety." He came to her with all the blandishments and apparent sympathy of one who had her interests sincerely at heart. He assured her she must somehow have been quite deceived when she supposed God had forbidden her to eat of all the trees of the garden. It could not be so, consistently with the goodness of God and the interests of the human family: On the contrary, it was well known that, by partaking of the tree which she supposed to be forbidden,

she and her companion would "be as gods, knowing good and evil." The gilded bait was swallowed, and we all know the results. This, however, was only a beginning of the seduction. It has been practised successfully in all ages. There have been delusions, instigated by the wicked one, at all times and under all circumstances, to allure the unwary to the ruin of their souls. In the apostolic age they abounded. Even while the apostles lived, the early churches were distracted and agitated by them. The Epistles are filled with counsels and warnings and entreaties. It is so still. In our own day Satan appears sometimes under the guise of an angel of light. With a profession of superior enlightenment and greater zeal and advanced piety, he introduces stealthily the most destructive errors which, he well knows, will so increase and operate as, in the progress of time, to undermine the whole system of gospel truth. At other times, practices unsanctioned by the divine word are gradually admitted, until they end in a complete scheme of superstitious observances that overlay the doctrine of Christ. Assaults are again made on the passions and the appetites and the peculiar propensities of men, so as to entice them from the paths of purity and propriety into forbidden courses. Nothing is left undone that can influence our frail humanity, whether it be intellectual or sensual. We need to be on our watch against the invasion of the enemy through every sense of the body, and every faculty of the mind. We should ever hear the warning of the wise man—"my son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." The more we think we are safe we are the less secure. The less we consider our danger it is in reality the greater. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you."

II. Such being the danger of disciples the Apostle next

instructs them wherein their safety lies. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you ; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Ver. 27.

These are precious views, let us try to enter into them.

1. The security of the believer is at once ascribed to the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is obviously what we are to understand by the anointing of which the Apostle speaks. Oil is the well known emblem of the Spirit. It is properly so because of its uses and properties, purifying, healing, and nourishing, while it was most grateful to all who were brought into contact with those on whom it was poured. No being but the Spirit of God can keep the soul. Our own strength is weakness and our wisdom folly. None can redeem or deliver his brother any more than himself. But the Spirit can and has undertaken to do it. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." And he who confides in the Spirit may say, "when I am weak then am I strong."

2. The very promise of the Spirit is made in the text which encourages us to confide in Him. He "abideth in you." This was the precious promise of Christ to his disconsolate followers. "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The soul of the believer is His chosen temple. There He is with His unerring wisdom to guide in every movement, with His almighty power to uphold against every temptation and strengthen for every duty, with His gracious consolation to sustain under all trials, and with His sanctifying grace to overrule and bless all things for edification. How careful

we should be not to grieve or quench the Spirit. If we only confide in him we need want for nothing.

3. For observe next how independent He is said to render the man in whom He abideth. "Ye need not that any man teach you, the same anointing teacheth you of all things." This certainly does not mean that he is made presumptuous and unwilling to be taught by others, as though he needed not their help. The apostle's practice contradicts such a supposition. He is engaged in teaching the very persons whom he congratulates as independent of human teaching. Nor is there any inconsistency between his views and his practice. He taught the disciples, and they were grateful for his instructions, and were much edified by them. Yet supposing him to be withdrawn from them, it did not follow that they must remain in ignorance. The Spirit could teach by him or without him. Even an apostle could not open the mind to apprehend a single truth unless the Spirit employed and blessed him. Circumstances might arise in which believers would be deprived of all external means of edification. They might be laid on beds of sickness, and shut out from public ordinances. They might be cast on some distant shore, where such privileges were not enjoyed. They might be confined within the narrow limits of a brittle bark on the deep waters, where little was heard but the voice of profanity or folly. They might be immured in the dark prison, and deprived of books and friends and all human aids to devotion or instruction. But in none of these undesirable and trying positions could the Spirit be excluded. He could teach in them all in answer to earnest prayer. He could make the very privation of an ordinance to be an ordinance. It is amazing how often the greatest enlightenment of mind has been found in circumstances that promised no advancement. The unlettered peasant has many times given proof of a thorough training in the things of God.

And this has not always been confined to a few simple and leading truths. He has discovered betimes a large acquaintance with the whole circle of gospel doctrine. The reason is that the Spirit has caused him to describe it in his own experience. He has learned the doctrine of human depravity by being well acquainted with his own heart and life. He has found the value of Christ in being enabled to embrace Him, and can say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He has "tasted that the Lord is gracious." He knows the fulness and freeness of salvation by having himself so partaken of it. Literally "the same anointing teacheth him of all things." He can testify of every doctrine of Christ that "it is truth, and no lie, even as it hath taught him." No one need attempt therefore to dislodge him out of the stronghold in which he has found such security and peace. The teaching of the Spirit has made him, if need be, independent of man.

4. It is, therefore, declared that he is safe. "Ye shall abide in him." Seeing the Spirit abides in him, he shall abide in Christ. The latter is the necessary evidence of the former. If he were to depart from Christ, it would be proof that the Spirit had departed from him. But the covenant of grace secures that both shall be enduring. Our Lord has said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." In the same strain the apostle argues, "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that if

we do draw back from a life of faith and holiness, we are bound to conclude we are not the subjects of the Spirit's gracious work. Whatever may have been our attainments and exercises, we must have been deceived. Our duty is, in such a case, now to repent and believe the gospel. Christ invites us, and we should never rest until we are enabled to say, "To them that believe he is precious." And being in him, we should yield ourselves to the Spirit that we may be safe and "abide in him."

III. This leads us to consider the apostle's view of the believer's duty, "And now, little children, abide in Him." ver. 28.

There is no inconsistency between our security being placed entirely in the grace of the Spirit, and the obligation of the duty here enjoined upon us. It does not follow that because the Spirit abides in us, and maintains His own work, we are set free from any responsibility. Rather, it is the very reverse. Since the Spirit dwells in us, we are the more called upon to be diligent and faithful. We are left without excuse, seeing we are under the power of Him who is infinitely wise, and powerful to direct and sustain us. This is the very use which an inspired apostle makes of this truth, saying, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." His very argument for activity on our part, consists of this sovereign exercise of divine grace within us. The willing and the doing are both ascribed to God, and for that very reason we are held responsible to advance in the divine life. This sentiment must be admitted. It requires no farther confirmation. Rather, therefore, let us occupy ourselves by inquiring how this duty may be best discharged. That we may abide in Christ, under the grace of His Spirit what shall we do? We reply,

1. In order to preserve the health of the body we use the utmost diligence to procure necessary food, and so should we do for the soul. What painful industry men are accustomed to endure for the sake "of the meat that perisheth." No effort is untried that it may be abundant, and good, and wholesome. So let it be in things spiritual. We are to provide whatever is necessary for edification. We must secure the word and ordinances, and whatever may be necessary to make them available for our growth in grace. If not, we cannot prosper.

2. As we freely use the food we have secured for the body, so let us do with our spiritual food. We will not starve while we have bread and to spare, or perhaps food laid up for many years. Yet many neglect the precious word, the refreshing ordinances, and the advantageous opportunities which God in His mercy has supplied. How can they hope that they shall profit? Rest assured we are as dependent on the means of grace for the health of the soul, as on daily food for that of the body.

3. As when we have partaken of the food which our industry has provided, we employ our strength in the active duties of our calling, so let us be diligent and active in serving God. Indolence is injurious alike to body and mind. As we receive good of the Lord, we must do good to others. It is in watering others, we are ourselves watered. It is in doing good we get good. In serving others we serve ourselves.

It is thus we discharge the duty of abiding in Christ, while all this is done with faith in His name, and dependence on His Spirit. And that we may be urged so to act, consider—

IV. The reasons assigned and the motives urged by the apostle in the text, "that when He shall appear, we may

have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

The fact is assumed that Christ shall appear, and two most solemn reflections are founded on it.

Christ will appear. This is the plain and repeated testimony of the divine word. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Well may we cry, "Who shall stand when he appeareth?" The two cases described in the words before us, reveal how it shall be in the solemn hour.

1. Some shall have confidence. They believed in Him. They continued in Him. They died in Him. They have heard the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. They see the Lord in the air, and, raised from the grave, they go to meet Him with gladness. Of all beings He is the very one they are most desirous to behold. They salute Him with the cry, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, He will save us." They have confidence because they trusted in Him, and abode in Him. They are conscious they embraced Him as a Saviour, and hence they know He will accept them as a judge. They gain their whole heart's desire, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

2. But it is implied there is another class very different from these, "those who shall be ashamed before Him at his coming." This is the revelation of Daniel, "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

To this agrees the saying of our Lord Himself, "all that are in their grave shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." How awful it will be to be ashamed in that day! Ashamed of unbelief! Ashamed of sin! Ashamed of ourselves! Ashamed of slighted opportunities, neglected privileges, and lost souls! How blessed it will be not to be ashamed before Him at His coming. Not ashamed of Him who now appears in His glory! Not ashamed of the hope we had in Him, while men reviled it! Not ashamed of the realization of that blessedness for which we long looked and prayed! Oh, brethren, be ye in Christ now, abide in Him, and so you "shall have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

LECTURE XVII.

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”—1 JOHN ii. 29.

THERE is a peculiarity in the style of the apostle which is deserving of special notice, and which it is seasonable to notice at present. In the 27th verse he says at the beginning, “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you,” which must be understood of the work of the Spirit, and then in the close of the same verse he says, “Ye shall abide in him, which must be understood of the Son. The peculiarity is that he passes from speaking of the Spirit to treat of the Son without naming either of them, and he applies to each the same personal pronoun, he or him. Again, in the 28th verse, in which he distinctly applies to Christ what he had said in the close of the 27th—he proceeds to speak of His second coming, saying, “When he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Yet in the 29th, without any notice of a change in the object which engaged his attention, he uses language which is most appropriately applicable to the Father—“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” It need scarcely be said such words naturally suggest the idea of the Father. Thus without express notice the apostle speaks of the Spirit, and the Son, and the Father, as one Being—one in Godhead, and character, and work. We are thus furnished with an incidental

and strong proof of a divine equality in the persons of the Godhead, as well as with a happy illustration of their blessed concurrence and connexion in the salvation of men.

Passing, however, from this peculiarity of style, we proceed to notice the subject of the verse before us. And this is two-fold—1. A standard of judgment is set up, and 2. an evidence is thus furnished by which we may be satisfied of the gracious state of the believer.

I. A standard of judgment is set up—"If ye know that he is righteous."

The expression is not put in this form to suggest the idea of doubtfulness. On the contrary, it is an assumption of certainty. "If ye know," is tantamount to "since ye know." There is indeed one view in which it may be understood to be expressive of uncertainty. This is when it is applied to the attainments of those who truly know God. There are some who do not know Him. In the midst of all the light that has been poured on His character they are ignorant of Him. They have never entered into the views of His righteousness furnished by the gospel of His Son. They are, therefore, incompetent to form any right estimate of the character of those, who, through grace, have become His children. But as for those who have been enlightened to know that He is righteous, through the revelation that has been made of Him in His Son, they are thereby qualified to form a just opinion respecting the character of His people, and it is this—"They know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

How full is the evidence furnished by the light of revelation that God is righteous! It has been well said, "He is righteous"—a glorious view of God, comprehending all His moral perfections, His holiness, truth, mercy, goodness, justice, everything in which God displays His moral beauty and loveliness. This is the peculiarity of the Scripture

revelation of God, that it displays all these perfections so as to make the light of His righteousness more clear and intense. The most brief notice of each will supply sufficient illustration.

He is righteous in His holiness. He maintains it in a way which is in strictest harmony with the requirements of His law. It is never sacrificed in the provisions of the Gospel. On the contrary, we learn from the vision of Isaiah that when the Seraphim contemplated the glory of Christ as the Saviour of men, that which impressed them most in His wonderful history was the display it made of the divine holiness, so that they cried out in ecstasy at the transcendent exhibition of it, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory."

He is righteous in His truth. On every part of the divine dispensation it may be found written—"God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent; hath he said it, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall he not bring it to pass?" He has uttered no threatening which He shall not execute, He has delivered no promise which He shall not fulfil. All that know Him can "set to their seal that God is true."

He is equally righteous in His mercy. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth go before his face." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

He is righteous in His goodness. All its bounties are conferred on the sinner for Jesus' sake. "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

He is righteous in His justice. "Ye say the way of the

Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" We may be tempted to think betimes that the dispensations of the Lord towards ourselves or others are partial and severe. But all such suspicions are banished when time is viewed in connexion with eternity. Present trials may be the precursors and preparation for higher blessings. The promise is sure, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Many have been enabled to say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

"He is righteous." O! how righteous. There never has been a deviation in Him from the strictest rectitude. His law has universally distinguished aright between good and evil. It is "holy, and just, and good." His perfections have invariably been conformed in all their exercises to its unbending rule. His works have ever been in harmony with its unswerving purpose. His character has never deviated from its upright standard. His providence has uniformly been guided by its direction. Clouds and darkness have sometimes rested on His ways. But time dissipated them all, and in due season manifested His untarnished glory. Or if His unfinished plans are still mysterious to our apprehension, and surrounded by difficulties which we cannot yet explain, we have learned from the past to trust for the future. We can wait in confidence for the issue, knowing it shall be good and right. The words of the prophet are right words, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." We know that at last, when all God's ways are manifested, and His purposes accomplished, and His dispensations unravelled and disclosed, the whole intelli-

gent and holy universe will burst out in one universal cry of transport. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints; who would not fear thee and glorify thy name?" "He is righteous." Consider then—

II. The evidence furnished by this standard, enabling us to judge of the gracious state of the believer. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

In this statement two things are assumed—that certain persons are righteous, and that their righteousness is a satisfactory proof of their having been born of the Spirit. Let these be considered apart.

1. There are some of whom it may be said, they are righteous. This is to be understood, not of the imputed righteousness by which they are justified, but of the personal righteousness by which they are sanctified. It may be said of them as of Zecharias and Elizabeth, "They were both righteous, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." This is what is designed when it is written of Christ and the vital union of His people with Him, "He of God is made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and (at the same time) sanctification, and redemption."

If it is asked, how is such a change made to pass upon the sinner? our reply is in the words of the divine promise, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their hearts, and write it in their minds, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This is enough to account for their complete transformation of life. Of every one on whom the Spirit of God has thus operated it may be said, "He is righteous." A few words will explain how it is so.

He thus perceives the meaning of the law. He obtains a

view of its spirituality and extent which he never had before. He sees how it covers his whole life, and enters into the deepest recesses of his heart. Like the apostle, he learns to say, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." He is made to feel how it takes cognizance of every action of his life, and every motive of the mind.

He thus feels the obligation of the law. He is led distinctly to perceive that it is impossible for it to relax its demands. It can no more change than God its author. It cannot accommodate itself to the weakness or fickleness of man. As it was in the beginning, so it is now, and shall be for ever. It must always endure to claim the universal and unbroken homage of the heart and life.

He is thus made to love the law. No matter how far he comes short of it, and how much it condemns him, he cannot but approve, and admire, and applaud it. He condemns himself, but he justifies it. He learns to cry, "I know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." He knows it is at once his interest and duty to be conformed to it. He mourns that he is not so completely. And in the love of the law, united with the hatred of sin and self, he can enter into the lamentation of the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

He thus learns habitually to avoid the violation of the law. He cannot live in sin. If he is betrayed into it, it is his burden and grief. He hears God's voice ever proclaiming of whatever is contrary to it, "O! do not this abominable thing that I hate." He may be overcome by the force of temptation. But the whole bent of his mind is towards righteousness. That is his habit. He can unfeignedly say, "I would do good."—"I delight in the law of God after the inward man."—"With the mind I serve the law of God."

He is thus impelled to obey the law. It is not the ground

of his hope, but it is the rule of his life. The very same reason that constrains him to abandon it as his hope, causes him to embrace it as his rule. It is his perception of its excellence. It is so excellent that he knows he has forfeited all claim to a reward of obedience. But this very excellence makes him love it and long to be found walking in its precepts. Like David he has learned to say, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

He fears to transgress the law. He knows that a penalty has not been attached to it in vain. If the ungodly violate it, as they habitually do, it is under the solemn warning, "be sure your sin shall find you out." If they escape the judgments of God, as they may do, in time, they shall assuredly be overtaken in eternity. Even the godly shall not sin with impunity. The covenant of love into which they have been taken engages that if they depart from God, they shall be visited with His chastisements, and so restored from their backslidings. They therefore fear to offend God. They know they have to do with a righteous God, and they are afraid of His judgments.

Say now what must be the influence and effect of such exercises as these? It is not too much to say of their subject, "he is righteous." Let it be remembered all this process goes on in his mind under the providence and grace of the Holy Spirit. That gives it a power and efficacy which otherwise it could not have. It makes him at once wise to discover and strong to do that which is good and right. He sets the Lord always before him, and his aim is growing conformity to Him. He wishes to be free from sin, and to abound in holiness. "He is righteous." This is the first sentiment in the statement now before us, and it prepares us to consider—

2. Such righteousness furnishes satisfying proof that He who manifests it is born of God.

It is worthy of notice that the text seems to refer to the judgment which we thus form of others rather than of ourselves. "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." This is the principal, if not the only rule, by which we can form an opinion of others. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Let such a course of conduct as has been described be witnessed in any one, and we cannot doubt the reality of his religion. We never do doubt in such a case. We are fully persuaded that in such a man we behold a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. We cannot but hail him as "an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ."

Yet it is quite possible this same man may think very differently of himself. With all his purity, and piety, and excellence, and holiness, he may not be assured of his genuine conversion to God. He may be in much darkness and have many doubts about his own state. He sees many things within himself which no other eye can see. Think of Paul pronouncing himself the "chief of sinners." While all others applauded, he lay before God in the deepest humiliation.

Such evidence, however, as has been adduced ought to be satisfactory to all. It is so to others, and it ought to be so to ourselves. And we shall glance at a few reasons why it should satisfy all, in accordance with the sentiment of the text.

One is, that nature can bear no such fruit. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Education, and example, and prudence may do much, but they cannot produce the holiness of which we have spoken. They may so far influence as to secure much outward propriety and even amiability, but they are powerless to create that righteousness which springs from the heart, influences the whole conduct, and draws its motives

from above. Wherever such is found it is evidence that the subject of it has been "born of God."

Again, we find that it is distinctly ascribed to grace in the divine Word. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Good works, such as deserve the name, good in the principle from which they spring and the end at which they aim, springing from the love of God, and aiming at His glory, can proceed only from His grace. Wherever they are we have so many witnesses to the new creation.

Besides, the Spirit alone can sustain, as He begins such a course of holiness. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Where He dwells these abound in all forms and under all circumstances. Good is done, whatever be the conduct or ingratitude of its object. Righteousness is maintained, whatever are the temptations to abandon it. And truth is kept inviolate, whatever the sacrifices it entails. Is such the habitual deportment? We may rest satisfied it exists only where the Spirit dwells.

These views are amplified and confirmed by the unbroken and constant testimony of the divine Word. Our Lord has said, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." John repeats the same sentiment again and again in this epistle. "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." A sinful life proves the absence of grace, and a godly life its presence.

Finally, in such righteousness as has been described there is a meetness for the kingdom of heaven. Hear what the

apostle says, " We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of God unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness ; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This is not the title to heaven, but it is the meetness for it. Wherever it has been produced, the destination of that soul is the enjoyment of heaven at last. This is our conclusion, for " if we know that he is righteous, we know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

LECTURE XVIII.

“ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—1 JOHN iii. 1-3.

THERE is a fresh example in these verses, of the peculiarity of the apostle's style, noticed in the commencement of the last lecture—his indiscriminate reference to the Father and the Son. Thus, in the first verse, he speaks of the love of the Father and the sons of God, and then, as if still treating of the same person, he adds, “The world knew him not,”—words which can be applied only to Christ. The same thing occurs also in the second verse. He says, “Now are we the sons of God,” and then subjoins, “When he shall appear,” manifestly referring to the second coming of Christ. It is clear the apostle felt that in speaking of God, he might present either the Father or the Son to his reader's attention. On no other principle are his words either intelligible or coherent.

Turning, however, from the style to the subject, we find it is an enlargement of that on which the apostle had previously entered. He had spoken of the sinner being born again, and that led to the more full developement of his thoughts in the

words before us. They are full of precious matter. It is necessary to view them all together that we may have before us the whole subject of which they treat. We shall simply follow the order of the passage in unfolding the views contained in it. And our prayer is that we may find in our own experience the best exposition of their meaning.

I. First, then, we are arrested by the manner in which the apostle opens the subject—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." It is the language of adoration and wonder. Our astonishment might well be excited when we reflected that God had created us. Still more, it was wonderful that he preserved us, notwithstanding our unworthiness and sin. But that He should adopt sinners into His redeemed family, and make and keep them sons, this was an expression of condescension and grace which might well prompt the exclamation, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

What, then, is the manner of this love? It passeth knowledge; but we may offer a few thoughts upon it.

It was everlasting love. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world: having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." This is an overwhelming thought that the great God should, self-moved, from eternity, set His love on any of the children of sinful men, and purpose to take them into the intimate and endeared relation of sons. We can only say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

It was gratuitous love. There was certainly nothing in the sinner, unless it were his misery, to call it forth. On the contrary, there was everything to hinder and repel it. This is the testimony of God himself, when He says by His prophet, "Thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing

of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live." Let any one think upon himself, and remembering what he was when God called him by His grace, say wherefore he was chosen of God, unless in the exercise of his sovereign grace? To this alone it can be attributed.

It was at the same time costly love. It could not be expressed otherwise than in such a way as would maintain the law and character and honour of God inviolate. This required the death of His own Son, and that was therefore not withheld. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The sinner's redemption was purchased by the greatest sacrifice which heaven itself could offer.

And then how rich the blessings procured by such love. We may truly say, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Nothing is wanting to complete the blessedness of all who are found in Him. It is God's own testimony, "Ye are complete in him." "He of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's."

Truly, we may adopt the exclamation of the apostle, and say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." But we need not go beyond the text for a reason. It specifies one blessing, and we shall now proceed to consider it."

2. "We are called the sons of God."

It is clear this statement must be understood in a restricted sense. All are the sons of God by creation. So are they also by providence. He hath made them and preserves them. But it is neither to creation nor providence the text refers. It is to a sonship peculiar to those who are the objects of redeeming love. They are those who have "been born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Adoption into the family of God is singled out as the evidence and effect of His love. Nor can we wonder at this selection. Let us consider what is involved in it, and we cannot fail to acquiesce in the discrimination of the apostle.

Think of the work that is done when the sinner is made a son of God. Then he is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." When man was first created, we are informed God said, "Let us make man after our image, in our likeness." Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are represented as uniting in that work. Hence it is ascribed to them indiscriminately, sometimes to one, sometimes to another, and then to all. So also is it in the new creation. The sinner is said to be a child of God—born of the Spirit—a new creature in Christ Jesus. From the author of the work we may well conclude what it must be in its vital importance and essential nature. It is a new birth unto righteousness. The sinner is made alive unto God.

Think again, therefore, of the change that is effected in such a work. They who are the subjects of it are made to pass from death to life, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The change which takes place in the infant when it is born into this world, is not so great as that which is produced in the sinner when he is born again. The infant is ushered into a new world, and so is he. For the first time it beholds the light, and so with him. It enters on activities, and enjoyments, and trials which were unknown

before, and so does he. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new."

Think of the privileges of sonship. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." They have access to God as children to a father. They may come to Him in the full assurance of faith, and hope, and love. They may ask what they will and it shall be done unto them. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Think, finally, of the inheritance in store for them. "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Whatever Christ is to inherit, they are to inherit. They are to inherit it on the same title, and that is His righteousness. And what is it? It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven."

O ! how just the exclamation, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." We, sons of God ! We, who were so guilty, and vile, and worthless ! We, made and treated as sons ! Sons of God ! O ! the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of God ! It passeth knowledge. Surely there is no dignity, no happiness, no blessing so great as those of the sons of God. In reality this is true. But it is not so considered by many. Let us therefore notice—

3. The estimate formed of the privilege of sonship by the world. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

This abatement to the blessedness of the righteous is most appropriately introduced here. It might have been supposed, from what has been said, that the sons of God would themselves continually exult in their singular privileges, and that all men would applaud them as the happiest and most excellent of the children of men. This certainly ought to be

the case. But alas ! it is very different. The words before us present a very different view of the matter, and they need to be considered with care.

They teach us that the world does not know the sons of God. The word is used habitually in the scriptures to signify approval. "The Lord knoweth, that is approveth, the way of the righteous." But the world is far from doing the same. They consider them of all men the most foolish. They see that their heart is set on another world, and that for the sake of it they are willing to sacrifice the present. This they regard as the loss of a certain good for an uncertain advantage. There is more, too, than a persuasion of their folly. It is mixed with a dislike of their ways. "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." The world both disapproves and dislikes the peculiarity of the sons of God.

The reason is suggested in the text. "Therefore," saith the apostle. There is a reference to something which he had said before. But he had only said it was a blessed thing to be called the sons of God. Can it be, then, this is that which the world disapproves and dislikes? This is clearly his meaning. And he states a truth which is verified by the facts of every day's occurrence. Worldly men do not understand the doctrine of sonship. It is too spiritual for their perception. They cannot enter into its views, or principles, or joys, or hopes. They consider it to be presumptuous and insulting. Can it be there is a class peculiarly dear to God, to which they do not belong? They are offended by such a supposition. They reject it as untrue. They scorn it as the offspring of spiritual pride.

Unhappily, however, for their hot displeasure, there is an indisputable fact to prove this enmity of the world to the sons of God. It is quoted by the apostle. It is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says of the world and of Him,

"it knew him not." This accords with the history, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The rejection of the Son of God by His own countrymen is a standing fact, fearfully illustrative of what may be expected for true godliness in all generations. He had everything to recommend Him. There was nothing that could be construed into a just ground of offence. Yet He was put to death as a malefactor.

It is well for the sons of God to observe these things. John said to the disciples of his day, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Our Lord said to His, "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord." The conduct of the godly is a reproof to the world. They are "a peculiar people." We speak of what they ought to be, and of what, so far as they are consistent, they are. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Ought this, then, to offend them? Certainly not. It teaches them what to expect. It ought to profit them. It should put them on their guard, that they may give no unnecessary offence. It should make them thankful they are not of the same spirit. They should remember the question, "Who maketh thee to differ?" And they should zealously endeavour so to act as to persuade the world to lay down its enmity to true religion, and become itself the happy subject of it. Meanwhile let them remember all the enmity of the world cannot destroy their sonship. And for their encouragement it is therefore added

4. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

How carefully the views of the Apostle are balanced in this passage. When he set forth sonship and its high privileges he annexed a caution, "the world knoweth us not," lest any might be disappointed and injured. So again after he had given that caution, he re-assures them of the reality and

continuance of their blessedness, "now are we the sons of God."

This might be rendered necessary by the dark suspicions of their own minds. They found much within them contrary to what they could desire or might expect. Darkness was thus often made to rest on their hopes, and they became perplexed about their state. Let them not be cast down. It was sovereign love that first adopted them into the family of God, and the same would continue them in it. Let them hear Jehovah saying, "I the Lord change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Or it might be rendered necessary by the conduct of others towards them. They might find themselves suspected and evil entreated. The hand of injurious violence might be laid upon them, or the tongue of calumny let loose against them. They ought not to be disconcerted even if it should prove to be so. All this might be permitted for their benefit. Through it all let them remember they are still the sons of God.

Nor should they forget what was required of them as such. They had a mission to fulfil, a character to maintain, a work to do. Consistency was demanded at their hands. "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." "Walk worthy of your high vocation." So living they might enjoy the sweet consciousness, that, let the world do or say as they might, they could appropriate the assuring words, "now are we the sons of God." This is their present privilege. And then—

5. Their thoughts are directed to the future. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

How instructive! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." There is much which we would like to know respecting our future destiny, that has not yet been revealed to us.

Probably there is much which we are not at present capable of knowing. We are prone to indulge an idle curiosity which the Scriptures never satisfy. When one came to our Lord and asked, "are there few that be saved?" He gave no reply save to exhort, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate." But there is one thing which we do know. About it there is no obscurity, no uncertainty. "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." In this revelation there are three things to be noticed.

"He shall appear." The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven. He will come in the glory of His Father. "Every eye shall see him."

"When he appears we shall be like him." This assimilation will extend to both the body and the soul. At the time of His appearing the resurrection of the dead shall be accomplished. The bodies of His people "shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body." "Sown in corruption they shall be raised in incorruption." Better still, their souls shall be like Him. They shall see as He sees, feel as He feels, do as He does. They will have "the mind of Christ." In plain terms, their holiness will be perfected. All sin and all temptation to it will cease for ever. The longings of the believing soul after perfect purity will be fully gratified. "They shall be satisfied when they awake with his likeness."

The reason is added, "for we shall see him as he is." By faith they know somewhat of Him now, and just in proportion to its strength they are conformed to His moral image. Then their faith shall become sight. The words shall be verified, "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." The effect will be blessed. It will be to produce perfect and entire conformity to Jesus. His character will be fully understood, supremely loved, and universally imitated. Then shall the inscription be written on the whole

character and conduct of His people—on all they are and have—"holiness to the Lord." Even now, the prospect of such a consummation is sanctifying. Hence it is added—

6. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

Nothing could be more natural or forcible than this conclusion. A man has placed his hope for eternity in Christ. He has put himself in His hands. He can say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Under the influence of such hope, he expects to be like Christ and to see Him as He is. What must the present effect then be? Surely the most purifying. Only think!

He hopes one day to be like Christ. His grief now is that he resembles Him so little. His ardent desire and highest aspirations are to be holy as He is holy. Just in proportion to such desires must be their purifying efficacy.

He hopes to see Him as He is. He longs to be in His presence. He thirsts for communion with Him. He waits for the fulfilment of the promise, "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John xiv. 3. He looks forward to the consummation of the Saviour's prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John xvii. 24. How then must He be influenced now? His hope purifies him.

In a word, he hopes to spend eternity with Jesus, never to be separated from Him. How just, then, the text, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

LECTURE XIX.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law ; for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”—1 JOHN iii. 4-7.

IT is observable throughout this epistle that the writer is led to apply every doctrine, of which he treats, to a practical purpose. For example, in the first chapter, a leading topic is fellowship with God, and this is the application that is made of it, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” In the second chapter the doctrine of the atonement is thus presented, in connection with its sanctifying purpose and influence, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins.” It is taken for granted that the doctrine must be used for the removal and destruction of sin. The third chapter opens with the high privilege of the believer’s sonship, his adoption into the family of God ; and the effect of its being enjoyed is thus described, “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.” Truly, of every part of the Christian system it may be said, it is a “doctrine

according to godliness." In the verses now to be considered this feature is still more marked and prominent. Every one of them sets forth a new view of the truth, but it is one calculated and intended to discourage sin and promote holiness. The 4th verse denounces sin as a transgression of the law. The 5th declares that the very purpose of our Lord's mission was to take it away. The 6th represents the believer's union with Christ to be productive of the same result. And the 7th pronounces the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian to be righteousness. Any one of these would be sufficient to occupy all our time, but we must comprehend them all. Let us consider them in the order in which they are laid before us.

1. Sin is denounced as a transgression of the law. We read in verse 4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law ; for sin is the transgression of the law."

How fitted is such a representation to warn us against it ! It teaches us what sin is.

The very fact that a law exists to direct our conduct is enough to claim our attention. "Do this, and live ; in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die:" these are announcements that may fairly demand our most serious consideration. They assume that there is a great good to be gained or lost, a mighty evil to be avoided or incurred. They may be regarded as beacons set up to warn us against shipwreck on the sea of life, or lights to guide us into a safe and peaceful haven.

Not only, however, is it a solemn thing to know there is a law to which we are subject, but the responsibility is greatly increased when we remember it is the law of God. He is the law-giver, and knows what to require, and has authority to enjoin it. It can, therefore, be no uncertain and changing rule which may be safely kept or broken. It must be like its author, immutable and unerring. To go contrary to it

must be resistance to the will of God. It is the transcript of His mind, and to disobey it must be rebellion against Him.

In its nature the law is absolutely perfect, being alike worthy of God, and adapted to advance the best interests of those who are subject to it. The inspired apostle applies three epithets to it, highly descriptive and commendatory of it. "The law," says he, "is holy ; and the commandment is holy, and just, and good." It is holy—distinguishing in all cases between right and wrong, good and evil. It puts the right label on every act of man, and never errs in the sentence which it pronounces. It is just—never claiming anything beyond what God is justified to require and man is bound to render. It holds an even balance between the Creator and the creature, the moral agent and his judge. And it is good—securing the highest advantages to all who obey it. "In the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward." It is well for time, and better for eternity.

This law it is the purpose of God ever to maintain. No change in man can produce a change in it. It abides, like its author, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." When man violated it, and God would save him from its condemnation, it must be in such a way as to maintain its integrity and honour. The Son of God, the Saviour, was therefore "made under the law." He rendered himself subject to its penalty and demands. He so suffered under it, and acted toward it, as to "magnify it and make it honourable." And it is at this day, more than at the beginning, the object of reverence and admiration to the whole intelligent creation of God.

It never was and can never be broken without entailing sorrow and suffering on the transgressor. One violation involved a whole race of moral beings in degradation and ruin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Sin brought the deluge that swept the earth with destruction. Sin kindled the fires that consumed the cities of the plain. Sin has been the cankerworm at the root of human happiness and prosperity. Wherever it is, and as it is, sorrow has taken up its abode. This is true of the believer and the unbeliever. If either sins he suffers. There is no exception to this rule. Even the Son of God must suffer when He took the sinner's place. Sin nailed Him to the cross, and laid Him in the grave. For this He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Say then, what must sin be? If it be a transgression of the law, how must God regard it? And how ought we to regard it? We must esteem it the enemy of God, the enemy of holiness, justice, and goodness; the enemy of man, of his peace and prosperity; the prolific source of all sorrow, because the transgression of that law which God has established as the directory of man and the safeguard of righteousness. Surely, in the light of these views, we may well acquiesce in the sentiment of the apostle, and acknowledge its force, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."

2. In pursuance of his argument, the apostle declares that the very purpose of Christ's mission was to destroy sin. In the 5th verse it is written, "ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him was no sin."

The very manner in which this statement is made, is the strongest and most impressive. "Ye know," says the apostle, that this was the design of our Lord's mission to the earth. It was taken for granted that all knew and admitted it to be so. No one would suppose He could come on any other errand. All other purposes would be utterly beneath His attention. To settle the affairs of empires would be too trivial. This would be one result, but it was too small to be the object of His mission. To expose, and denounce, and condemn, and

destroy sin was His purpose. This was proclaimed from the beginning to the end of His eventful history. All men knew it, and owned it, and the apostle could make his appeal to their admission.

It is worthy of observation how constantly this end of our Lord's ministry is kept before our attention. As soon as He was born He was announced by the angel under the name of Jesus, and the reason assigned was, "because He shall save His people from their sins." When His gospel began to be preached, Peter proclaimed its nature in these words, "Unto you first, God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." And another apostle, who had long preached it with power, and entered fully into its spirit, summed up its grand aim saying, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching them that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Thus constantly and forcibly is the purpose of our Lord's mission represented to be the destruction of sin.

And what did he do for the accomplishment of such a purpose? We estimate the importance of any object in the eyes of those who pursue it, by what they are willing to do or suffer, that they may gain it. Let Christ be judged then by this standard, and what must His estimate of salvation from sin have been, when we learn what He did and suffered for it?

For this purpose He was born. He took our nature. The Son of God became the Son of man. "Though He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal

with God, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man."

For this purpose He lived. He chose poverty, and reproach and the most injurious treatment, because they were in accordance with the design of His mission. "He was despised and rejected of men." "Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head."

For this purpose He died. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." "He gave his soul an offering for sin." "He poured it out unto death." "He gave himself for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God."

For this purpose He rose triumphant from the grave. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

For this purpose He appears for us at the right hand of God. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

For this purpose He will come again in His glory, and take His people to Himself. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

In a word, "he was manifested to take away our sins." This was the one grand aim of His mediatorial history.

Nor let us overlook the pointed expression which was added to this announcement, "and in him is no sin." What He sought for us He exemplified in Himself. No doubt we are thus reminded of His fitness to undertake such a work, being Himself without sin. No doubt also we are thus taught He went successfully through His undertaking, never once having been contaminated by that which He sought to destroy in us. But especially we are exhorted to look to Him

as the great example of what He would have us to be. By His mission, He atoned for our sin, and brought the most powerful motives to bear upon us, that we might fear and hate it; but He presented to us at the same time the model to which He desired that we should be conformed. He offered Himself to us at once as the ground of our hope, and the rule of our life. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed."

How cogent is this argument! If sin is not subdued in us the design of Christ's mission is not answered toward us. So far as we are concerned, He has died in vain. Not in vain, for His work will aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation. Oh let us give good heed to the apostle's testimony, "ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him was no sin."

3. It strengthens these views still further to observe that the apostle represents the believer's union with Christ to be productive of the same result. He says in the 6th verse, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

Nowhere is this view of the subject presented so forcibly as in one of our Lord's discourses. He says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me." He repeats the same sentiment and employs the same illustration again, saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

Not merely, however, is the repetition of the thought and of the similitude observable, but especially the practical light in which the subject is placed. On the one hand He gives the disciples to understand that without union with Him there could be no holiness, and that wherever it existed,

and as it was cherished, on the other, so would holiness abound.

Does not nature itself teach us this lesson? We enter the laden orchard and admire the rich and abundant fruit. The cause is at once apparent. These laden branches are found to grow on the strong and healthy stem. By it they are nourished, and on it they are entirely dependent. Let them be severed from it and of necessity they wither and die. And so does Christ hence derive the warning, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Nor can we omit to notice the appeal founded by Christ on His own illustration, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." It is to the honour of the tree that its fruit is abundant. And it is to the glory of God when His servants abound in holiness. Then are they proved to be in reality disciples of His Son.

No doubt it was the reiterated use of this figure by our Lord that led His Apostle John to recur to it so frequently. And the manner in which he does so in the verse before us is very strong. He says, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." It would be contrary to the Spirit thus infused into him to do so. He could not and would not indulge in it. "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him." The eye of faith has never been opened to discern His beauty or claims. "He hath not known him." His heart has never had any saving experience of His grace and love.

The conclusion is plain, and the illustration need not be continued. Wherever there is union with Christ, there is the destruction of sin, and a rich provision is made for the maintenance of true holiness. This must suffice, and it remains only to notice—

4. The distinguishing characteristic of the Christian is de-

clared to be righteousness. "Little children, let no man deceive you ; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

The manner in which this position is laid down is very decided. Men, he insinuates, might try to darken the plain subject of the evidences of our personal religion. But he warns them not to be deceived. The distinctive mark is brief, simple, and plain, and he expressed it in the words that have been quoted. Let us enter a little into them.

"He that doeth righteousness." He does it. He has laid the law of God before him, and seeks to walk in conformity to it. He understands it as it is expounded in the ten commandments, and these he makes, through grace, the guide of his life. He sets the Lord before him, as the first and grand object of his reverence and love. He cultivates His worship in public and private, and feels it must be in spirit and truth. He honours everything that is associated with Him, and holds converse with Him in it. He has special respect to His instituted ordinances. Out of love to God he seeks to render to men all their claims upon him. He respects all the relations they bear to him. He feels himself in trust to preserve their lives, their purity, their property, their honour. Even the workings of their heart towards both God and man he holds himself bound to watch with special care. This is his life.

Hence the apostle pronounces of all such, "They are righteous." This is proved by the fact that they "do righteousness." They manifest that the law has been written on their hearts by the Spirit of God. They discover that the two great principles, the love of God and man, are dominant within them. They demonstrate that in them the word is verified, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

In all this, Christ is their model. "They are righteous,

even as he is righteous." Their aim is to "grow up into him in all things." They desire that "the mind which was in him may be in them." They wish to "walk even as he also walked." Thus they are furnished themselves, and they satisfy others with the sure proof of their saving interest in Christ: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous."

Is it not truly admirable to see how the apostle heaps up the arguments which the Gospel of Christ supplies for the destruction of sin? In every statement there is a fresh appeal—"O do not this abominable thing which I hate." "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Let us see that we so understand it. And let us hear the divine call ever crying to us, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well."

LECTURE XX.

“He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”—
1 JOHN iii. 8.

THERE is a close resemblance between the character of Christ and His apostle John. He is known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” There was in them both a spirit of exceeding tenderness and love. Consequently, a peculiar fellowship distinguished their intercourse. And we read of John “lying on Jesus’ breast.”

There is also a similar resemblance in their manner of teaching. Both used great simplicity. Their discourses are largely composed of monosyllables. Yet they possess vast comprehensiveness. How pregnant with the weightiest principles is our Lord’s sermon on the mount? And the same may be said of the opening passages in both the gospel and this epistle of John. The weightiest truths are expressed in the simplest language. Both also captivate by a persuasive and loving spirit. Those who are in trouble like to read their discourses. They go to the heart with irresistible tenderness. Yet they are sometimes distinguished by extreme severity of both warning and denunciation. No writer in the New Testament has employed language so strong and severe as our blessed Lord. Take, for example, His discourse recorded in the 23d chapter of the gospel by Matthew, in which He re-

peats over and over again the fearful accusation—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." And for a similar example in John, we need not go beyond the text—"He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

In considering these words we cannot do better than take the three clauses of which they are composed, in their order, noticing them separately.

1. "He that committeth sin is of the devil."

The word that is rendered, "committeth," implies continued action. It is expressive of a habit rather than of an act. And the strong affirmation that is here made must be understood, not of a single evil act into which even a godly man may be betrayed by the power of temptation, but of the habitual course in which the transgressor chooses to live.

To such a one the strong terms of the text are habitually applied in the Scriptures. Thus in the 10th verse of the chapter we read, "In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil." In our Lord's parable, He says, "The tares are the children of the wicked one, and the enemy that sowed them is the Devil." He uses far stronger and plainer language, when He says to the Jews, after they had boasted of their descent from Abraham—"Ye are of your father, the Devil, and the lusts of your Father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." The Apostle Paul includes, in his description of sinful men, this feature, that they walk "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

Taking these and many similar passages in connexion with the text, what a view is presented to us of the vile and de-

structive nature of a habit of sin. It associates the man who indulges it, with Satan, the wicked one, the great enemy of God and godliness. And it ought to be impressive while we think of what is implied in such an association.

It assumes that the sinner is under the influence of Satan. His power over the body and the physical faculties of the mind is fearfully exposed in the history of demoniacal possessions in the gospel narrative. There is evidence no less clear and irresistible of his influence over moral principles. The language already quoted assumes it—"The lusts of your father ye will do," "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." When men sin and indulge their evil passions, they are only carrying out the purposes and desires of the master who is actuating and prompting them. They are doing his bidding, however unconsciously. One spirit can have influence over another, either for good or evil. "Angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation." And fallen angels may in like manner be employed to tempt and corrupt the children of men. It ought deeply to concern and exercise them that they are subject to such an evil influence.

There is more, however, in the expression of the text. It implies that not only are sinners subject to Satan, but that they are employed by him to aid him in influencing others to evil. It would hardly be possible on any other principle to account for the extreme effort made by wicked men to corrupt others. Look at the plans of the drunkard to inveigle others into the trap in which he has himself been taken. Look at the pleasantry and the threat and the promises so assiduously used to entice others into the evil courses which men are themselves pursuing. They are conscious they are injuring themselves. They know they incur additional criminality by seducing others. Yet they do it. It is manifest they are acting under the influence, and for the accomplishment of the

designs of the wicked one. Surely such a consideration should make them pause, and seriously bethink themselves of the position into which they have been brought.

For let it be added, it is implied in the passages to which we have adverted, that the wicked who are influenced and employed by Satan shall be sharers in his condemnation. This fearful feature of final condemnation is pointedly noticed by Christ in His description of the last judgment, saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." They were associated with him in sin, and so shall they be in sorrow. They were united with him in the evil influence of time, and so shall they be in the awful judgments of eternity.

Thus are we to understand, and thus ought we to be exercised, by this solemn announcement, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Let us next consider the additional statement—

2. "The devil sinneth from the beginning."

It needs scarcely to be noticed that we are not to understand this testimony of his entire history. He was created by God, and must have proceeded from His hand in the purity of holiness. "From the beginning" must be explained of a limited period, and refers probably to the commencement of the present dispensation, including the creation and the history of man. Throughout this whole period "the devil sinneth from the beginning."

There are two passages in the divine Word which furnish all the information we require to possess on the subject. The first is in 2 Peter ii. 4. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This fearful apostacy was accomplished prior to the formation of the present mundane system, and no doubt included the fall of Satan as a leading agent in the dire catastrophe. The other passage

is in Jude 6, "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Their first estate, it is clearly implied, was one of holiness and happiness, and in contrast to it, they fell into one of sin and suffering. In this sad reverse the devil occupied a prominent place. He became the enemy of God, and in the true spirit of his fatal apostacy, he devoted himself to extend the reign of sin in the creation of God. Looking back to that period, and dating from it, it may be said, "The devil sinneth from the beginning."

In strict harmony with this view we find the history of the temptation and fall of our first parents. No sooner had they been placed in the fair creation which God had prepared for them, than Satan began his wiles to encompass and overthrow them. The apostle tells us that "through his subtlety he beguiled Eve." It was counted a mighty achievement by him and his wicked confederates. A world was by one act destroyed. A whole race by one successful stratagem, was ruined. The wicked one did his work in a way worthy of him. And this is declared to us by the apostle for our warning and instruction. He gives us to understand that as it was with Satan, so it is with wicked men. "He sinneth from the beginning," and they are conformed to his ways. Let us therefore inquire what are the views of sin and of sinners which the apostle thus desires to present.

He thus reminds us of his perseverance in an evil course. As he did in the beginning, he continues to do to the end. His conduct toward our first parents is the model of what he has ever done toward their descendants. He is described as "a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour." Think of the hungry beast of the forest hunting through all its extent for his prey, and herein is the emblem of the unsatisfied appetite with which Satan pursues

the destruction of all whom he can influence. And it is deserving of notice how those whom he does succeed to influence are made to resemble him. As he does to them, so do they to others. It is written, "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." They are seduced by Satan and they become seducers. They are deceived by him, and they try to deceive others. Such is the progress of sin. It knows no limit. Once set in motion, it continues with accelerated pace to pursue its course, until it is itself destroyed in the destruction of others, like as Samson died in the death of the Philistines and the destruction of their temple.

At the same time we are reminded by the view of sin and Satan now before us, that there is no effectual restraint put upon iniquity, nor any reformation produced by all the sorrow and suffering which it entails. It is expressly written of those who are of the wicked one, "The fifth angel poured out his vial on the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." We sometimes think, as we witness the sufferings to which the ungodly are reduced by their sins, that surely they will learn wisdom, and pursue a new course. But we are almost uniformly disappointed. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots? then may they also, who have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." True, the opportunity of indulgence may be withdrawn, and then the sin is not committed, or a partial and temporary change may be produced. But mere suffering can effect no more. The Spirit of God alone can heal the malady. Give the same opportunity, and there is reason to fear the same result. Let providential hindrances be withdrawn, and the truth of the scripture testimony will be verified, "Because sentence against an evil

work is not executed speedily, therefore are the hearts of the children of men fully set in them to do evil."

Nor let us fail to add, as sin continues, so does its punishment. Satan and his angels are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness till the judgment of the great day." All they have suffered will not suffice. Past torments will not abate the future. These are to be increased. And so will it be with all the wicked. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." It will be with them as with him of whom it is testified, "The devil sinneth from the beginning." With these warnings before us let us notice—

3. The third and last clause of the text, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

The work of Christ is a full counterpart to that of Satan. As the latter introduced and perpetuated the reign of sin in our world so the former came to resist and overcome both it and him. In this mission He was completely successful. He laid the foundation of a kingdom that will eventually "destroy the works of the devil." And we shall glance at the evidence of this statement.

Our Lord's public ministry was opened with a signal triumph over Satan in personal conflict. The wicked one tried all the subtlety which he had practised successfully on our first parents, but it was in vain. He was slain by the sword of the Spirit in every fresh assault until it is recorded—"the devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him."

Another method was then adopted by Satan, but it only afforded our Lord an opportunity for a new triumph. He took possession of the minds and bodies of men in an unwonted manner and measure. Demoniacs encountered Christ through the whole period of his ministry. These cases were

very numerous and various. They appeared in all the forms of mental and bodily maladies. But in every case they yielded to the supreme authority and power of Christ. He commanded and they were compelled to obey Him. This afforded a full proof that not only was Christ personally superior to Satan, but that He was able to conquer him in others no less than in Himself. It shows that He has access to our minds and power over our bodies. He can cast out Satan from his usurped dominion over men. He is mighty in the persons of His people, as He had shown Himself to be in His own.

His death was no exception to His superiority and success. Lest any might suppose it to be such the very reverse is declared to be the truth, by the spirit of inspiration. The Apostle testifies, "through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." It was essential to the purpose of His mission that He should die. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Satan may or may not have known this. Such, however, was his malignity against the Saviour that he constantly instigated the Jews to put Him to death. It is expressly recorded of His betrayer, "then entered Satan into Judas, and he communed with the high priests how he might betray him unto them." Satan might be included in that saying, "him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." He became an unconscious instrument in the very act that crowned the redemption of men. Jesus cried, "it is finished," as He "bowed his head and gave up the ghost." By pouring out His soul unto death He expiated the guilt of His people. So completely was Satan overseen in the accomplishment of His death. It laid the foundation of an imperishable kingdom which shall wax stronger and stronger, while that of

Satan waxes weaker and weaker until, like the house of Saul before David, it is entirely subverted.

Of this triumph there was visible demonstration in His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to heaven. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." "God raised him from the dead having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible he should be holden of it." Having shown Himself alive to the full satisfaction of His friends and confusion of His enemies, He ascended visibly to heaven, as a triumphant conqueror. Admitted there His Spirit was poured out in token of His triumphant reception to glory. Hence His Apostle reasons, "therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This triumph He still maintains in His exaltation at the right hand of God. There He "appears in the presence of God for us." There He "ever liveth making intercession for us." "The residue of the Spirit" is with Him. The prophet says, "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The Spirit is at His command to "convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment." By His agency He is meeting and conquering Satan in the hearts of His people. He is thus casting him out as effectually as in the days of his flesh. And He will continue to gain this spiritual victory until He "shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

In conjunction with this agency of the Spirit, the judgments of God will be poured out until the kingdom of Satan is visi-

bly and universally overthrown. At one period "he shall be bound a thousand years." After this he shall be loosed out of his prison and suffered to make his last and most desperate assault upon the camp of the saints. Then shall come to pass what is written of him and of all his agents—"fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

So triumphant is the proof of the statement in the text—"the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Say brethren, whose children are we? Satan's? Or Christ's? One or other we must be. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

LECTURE XXI.

“ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”—1 JOHN iii. 9.

THIS is the apostle's crowning argument for the destruction of sin and the establishment of holiness. He had argued the question from the evil of sin, representing it in verse 4, to be “the transgression of the law”—from the design of Christ's mission, alleging in verse 5, “he was manifested to take away our sins”—from the necessary result of union with Christ, saying in verse 6, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not”—from the essential characteristic of every real disciple of the Lord, declaring in verse 7, “He that doeth righteousness is righteous”—from the evil origin of transgression, tracing it to its source in verse 8, “He that commiteth sin is of the devil”—and now to all this forcible argumentation he adds the strong asseveration of the text, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The language and the sentiment are alike peculiar, plain, and urgent. It is declared to be a fact that the regenerated man does not sin. Nay, more than this, it is affirmed that he cannot sin. And the reasons are assigned for what may seem, at first sight, to be such extraordinary statements. It will therefore be necessary carefully to consider them. And let us proceed to do so, with the prayers of David, “O

send forth thy light and thy truth ; let them lead us"—
 "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things
 out of thy law."

In prosecuting our inquiry into the meaning of the text, we may notice 1. The change which is represented to have taken place in the sinner, he is "born of God, and his seed remaineth in him;" and 2. The effect of that change, "He doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin."

I. The change, or the work of grace in the sinner. We may best hope to arrive at a clear conception of it by analyzing the two terms that are used to describe it. They are both figurative, and in their diversity we see at once the poverty of language and its incapacity fully to convey the mind of God, as well as the extreme anxiety that is hereby manifested to make it known.

1. "Born of God." This is twice repeated in the text. It is perhaps the most common figure in the New Testament to describe the work of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner. And it is especially worthy of observation and fitted to instruct and impress us, with what variety it is employed by those who have used it. In the beginning of the gospel by John i. 12, 13, we find it in this illustrative form, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name ; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The change is one which is essentially connected with faith in Christ. It consists in making those who had been aliens and enemies, sons of God. And it proceeds directly from a divine operation. This last idea is urged with peculiar emphasis and reiteration. The power is given to them, or the privilege, as it might have been rendered, to become sons. And this proceeds, "not from blood,"—from no hereditary disposition in man ; "nor from

the will of the flesh"—from no purpose or desire of man himself; "nor from the will of man"—from no influence of other men any more than our own; "but from God"—from His sovereign grace and almighty power. The simplicity of the passage is equalled only by its vast comprehensiveness and unfathomable depth of meaning. It shows that the weightiest truths are usually expressed in the simplest terms. The same figure was employed by our Lord himself, but he presents it in other lights. He said to Nicodemus, John iii. 3, 5, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The solemnity of His manner is deeply impressive. He spoke as one who was conscious of conveying a great truth and a fundamental principle. And let it be noticed how he changes the form of expression in every utterance. Now, it is "born again," intimating that the birth of which he spoke was one beside that which had already taken place. The rendering of His words might have been, "born from above," suggesting the source whence it must come, as well as its nature. Then His words are, "born of water and of the Spirit," a change of which water is emblematic, and in which the Spirit is the agent. At one time He says, without this change no one "can see the kingdom of God." He cannot understand its nature or exercises. He is blind and can have no spiritual or saving discoveries until his eyes are opened. He needs to be translated out of the darkness of nature into the light of truth. At another time He says, without this change no one "can enter into the kingdom of God." He cannot be a subject of it. He can have no part in it. He is incompetent to its engagements. And then He intimates its source in the contrast, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." As water cannot

rise above its fountain, so can no change in man be better or greater than its cause. If it come from the flesh it must be like it, earthly and sinful. When it comes from the Spirit, then it must be like Him, spiritual, holy, and heavenly. The very same figure is used by the Apostle Paul, when he speaks to Titus, iii. 5, of the great change in these words, "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is a regeneration, another and a new birth, of which the Spirit is the author, and in which the defilement of sin is washed away. It is unnecessary to say how constant is the use of the figure in the epistle before us. To be "born of God" is one of its most frequent and familiar phrases. And if not always in the same language, the same sentiment pervades the whole Word of God. No one can read it with any measure of attention and not know that it teaches everywhere the necessity of a change in man, which is nothing less than a new birth.

It may well be believed, from this constant use of the figure, that there is in it a peculiar propriety to express the work of which it is made descriptive. The more it is considered, the more it will be found to realize this expectation. The birth of the infant is its introduction to life. The senses and faculties may previously exist, but they are inactive, and so also is it in the conversion of the soul. The sinner is naturally dead. He possesses no doubt the faculty of knowing and serving God, but by reason of sin it is suspended and inoperative. It is only when he is born again, he becomes alive unto God. Then, but not till then, are his eyes opened to discover the things that belong to his eternal peace. Then, for the first time, his ears are opened to hear the voice of God, either in the proclamations of His word or the dispensations of His providence. Then his tongue is unloosed to speak with God in prayer, and for Him to a world lying in iniquity. Then his hands become free to do the work of the Lord. And then

his feet are turned into the way of His commandments. It is not too much to say of the subject of such a change, that he has been "born again." And hence arises the style of address to all such, current in the word of God, "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord; yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." This is in full accordance with the first figure of the text, declaring of every genuine disciple that he is "born of God."

2. The second is like unto it—"his seed remaineth in him."

It is immaterial whether *his* seed be understood of God or of the believer. It is that seed which God has sown in his heart. It is God's as the author of it. It is the believer's as the subject of it. Our Lord interprets it in His parable of the sower to be "the word of the kingdom." It is the word of truth by means of which His kingdom is introduced to the hearts of His people, and established in the world.

It is of more importance to inquire how this figure is designed and calculated to supplement, and strengthen, and illustrate the former one. They are brought together for the same reason already noticed, in our Lord's expositions of the great spiritual change that passes over His people. Different figures are employed because they present the same truth under different aspects. One illustrates this feature of it, and another makes that more plain. In the present instance the second figure appears to have been added to the first, in order to explain by what means the change of the new birth is at first accomplished, and afterwards maintained. Let us contemplate the subject under these two views.

First, the sinner is born of God by means of the truth. This is the sentiment so fully expressed by the Apostle

Peter, when he congratulates the believers whom he addressed saying, "ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." This seed therefore is the truth, the gospel. By the reception of it into the mind, the great change, so needful and so good, was effected. How natural that it should be so! The sinner continued in his iniquity, and was satisfied with his state, only because he was in darkness, and did not see either his danger or his duty. But now these have been discovered to him. He has been made to know the truth. He is left no longer ignorant of sin, but is taught to know its vileness and evil consequences. He is no longer ignorant of himself, but has been enlightened to see the depravity of his heart, the ungodliness of his life, and the certain destruction that awaits him if he continues in his present condition. Both these discoveries of sin and of himself, are made to him in the light of the gospel, so that at the same time he is made acquainted with Jesus Christ. He sees His glorious person, and blessed work, and wondrous grace. He can therefore be no longer indifferent to the claims which he has upon him. He recognises in Him his judge as well as his Saviour. He knows that he must soon "stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." "His own interests, as well as his new desires, therefore prompt him to embrace this Saviour. He sees his need of Him. He is satisfied with Him. He loves Him. He yields himself up to Him. The world is nothing compared with Him. He sees that even the interests of time are thus best secured. And as for eternity, there is no other provision. Now, is it too much to suppose that a change shall be produced in this man which is to all intents and purposes a new birth? No. It is a most

reasonable doctrine, that the sinner is born of God by means of the truth.

Second, it is in the same way the life of faith and holiness thus begun, is maintained in him. This idea is specially noticed in the text, "His seed remaineth in Him." It is in its own nature imperishable. The truth ever abides the same. The believer ever sees sin as he saw it at the first, vile and ruinous. He ever sees himself as he did at the beginning, exposed to ruin if he indulges it. He ever sees the Saviour as gracious and glorious as He appeared at the first. His claims do not diminish in his view. Nor does he ever find reason to change his conclusions respecting this world and the next, time and eternity. On all these subjects it may be expected he shall obtain clearer views and deeper experiences. "He grows in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." "Thus his seed remaineth in him." See that field well cultivated, richly sown with precious seed, carefully watched by the husbandman, watered by the rains, and warmed by the sun of heaven. What must be the result in the providence of God? Surely, we say, an abundant harvest. Then as it is in nature, so it is in grace. It is the same God that rules in both. The seed of truth is preserved and nourished in the heart, where it was at first sown by the good husbandman. And thus as the sinner was born of God by means of the truth, so this "seed remaineth in him," and the fruits of holiness are found in his heart and life.

Such is the change that passes on every child of God, as it is unfolded in the figures of the text. And we are now prepared to consider—

II. The effects that are declared to result from it—"He doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin." As two figures were used to describe the change, so are there two assertions to declare the results. The one is the assertion of a fact, and

the other is an argument to explain and confirm it. We shall consider them apart.

1. The fact—"He doth not commit sin."

Let it be observed this is said of every converted man. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." This at once suggests there is a sense in which it cannot be understood, while there is another sense in which it conveys a blessed truth.

It cannot be understood literally and universally. It is not true of every converted man that he sinneth not. We see men, of whose conversion we have no doubt, do that which is sinful. And no converted man will say he does not sin. It is of such the apostle says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

But there is an important sense in which this saying is true of every converted man. He does not sin knowingly, wilfully and habitually. David did sin, but not after this manner. The same is true of Peter, and Paul, and John. Every one of them was ready to own he sinned, but no one of them lived in sin. It was not his habit. Temptation may surprise and overcome the believer, but he will not persist in an evil course. He will not continue to do what he knows to be contrary to the will of God.

Thus understood, we may properly say of any servant of the Lord, "He doth not commit sin." We will say of a man, versed in literature, he is learned, although he is ignorant of many things. In like manner we speak of men, and say they are strong, although in some respects they may be weak. We judge of them by that which is prominent and paramount in them. We would say of David, and Peter, and Paul, and John, with all their acknowledged infirmities, they did not commit sin. They were righteous men, though not perfect men. And so we judge of men still, and say of the Christian

who maintains a blameless and consistent life, though we could point out many deficiencies, "He doth not commit sin."

We need to consider well this mark of true conversion. No one is the subject of it who lives in sin. Rightly interpreted, the declaration of the apostle is a universal truth, that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."

2. The second expression, explanatory and confirmatory of this fact, is still stronger, "He cannot sin, because he is born of God."

This saying is an unanswerable proof that the words of the apostle are not to be understood in their literal acceptation. They are affirmed respecting every converted man. But who would say of such, "He cannot sin?" He can sin. He has sinned. "The contention was so sharp between" Paul and Barnabas, "that they separated from one another." Who supposes they did not both sin in the controversy? So then converted men can sin, have sinned, and do sin.

But there is a sense, and a noble one, in which it must be said of every man truly regenerated, "he cannot sin." To live in sin is contrary to the new nature, of which he has been made a partaker. That nature cannot and does not sin. Had he no other nature he would never sin. And when he lays down the old man in the grave, and retains only the gracious nature received in his regeneration, he will sin no more, but live for ever, perfect in holiness and in happiness.

Even here, however, amid all the infirmities and temptations that beset him, there is a sense in which he cannot sin. He cannot do so as the habit of life. We say of a man of tenderness he cannot act cruelly, and yet he may possibly do a cruel deed. We say of a refined man, he cannot act with rudeness, and yet he may possibly do a rude thing. We say of a dignified man, he cannot do what is mean, and yet possibly he may so far forget himself as to do what is unworthy of his character and reputation. Just so an inconsistency

may be found in the Christian, yet he cannot live in sin. And there are many reasons why he cannot.

It is contrary to his views. He sees sin to be the greatest of all evils, and holiness to be the highest of all good. He cannot therefore but "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And the Christian cannot act contrary to his most cherished sentiments.

It is contrary to his tastes. He dislikes sin and he loves holiness. He can truly say, "I would do good; I delight in the law of God after the inward man." He finds his happiness in the word, and worship, and work of God. His highest enjoyment is in God himself. It is impossible that such a man could live in sin. His soul revolts against it, and he cannot do it.

It is contrary to his most determined purposes. The language of David is not strange to him, "thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." It were unreasonable to suppose such a man could live in sin. He cannot.

It is contrary to his habits. He has served God and found His service to be liberty. He has experienced that of all masters He is the best. He therefore says to those who would seduce him from his allegiance, "depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God." He cannot do otherwise.

It is contrary to his interests. He knows that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." He is not the fool to "sin against his own soul." He "has respect to the recompence of reward." "He seeks a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God." He hopes for an "inherit-

ance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." He cannot therefore live in sin.

One thought in conclusion. Such a life can proceed only from a new birth. None but the regenerated man will lead it. Nature will not produce this fruit. Grace alone can do it. "We do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles." But grace makes the barren soul fruitful. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

LECTURE XXII.

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”—1 JOHN iii. 10, 11.

“**D**OST thou believe on the Son of God?” “Lovest thou me?” These questions were addressed by our Lord, the one to a man to whom He gave sight, and the other to the Apostle Peter. Each answered him. The first said, “Lord, I believe.” The other said, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Thus it was assumed that it is our duty to inquire into the exercise of faith and love in our own minds, and that we may have a persuasion of their existence. The Apostle Paul indeed urges the necessity of instituting such an inquiry, saying to the Corinthians, “examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates.” And throughout this entire Epistle of John, this is a duty constantly assumed and inculcated. Whatever doctrine the apostle unfolds, and especially whatever privilege he describes, he accompanies or follows it with the evidence by which we may judge whether we have been brought under the power of the one, or enabled to possess and enjoy the other. It is in such a connection the verses now introduced to our attention are brought before us. The apostle had expounded the subject of the believer’s

sonship, and pronounced him to be "born of God." And then to enable every one to determine whether this gracious change had been effected in his case, he adds the language of the text, saying, "in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

In dwelling on this passage let us consider, 1. the distinction of men into two classes, the children of God and the children of the devil. 2. That this distinction may be manifested. And 3. The evidences by which it may be manifested—righteousness and love to one another: Surely this is an inquiry in which we have all a deep interest. Let us enter into it with a sincere desire to know what is our real state before God.

1. Men are divided into two classes, the children of God and the children of the devil.

This distinction is made in a way which takes for granted that all men are comprehended within it. For the object is to enable us to determine to which we belong, and it is assumed that we must belong to the one or the other.

Even this assumption is not to be passed without notice, for it is certainly very contrary to the prevailing views and practices of men. Many make no inquiry to what class they belong. It is not a subject that has ever seriously engaged their attention. Some who have thought upon it consider it is one on which it is not possible to obtain satisfaction, and they dismiss it from their minds. It may be they have concluded it would be great presumption in them to come to any decision upon it. To esteem themselves the children of God would seem to be incompatible with a becoming humility, and yet to think they were the children of the devil would be a hard sentence. These, therefore, come to no decision.

They are satisfied to live in entire uncertainty. Or if they do classify men, themselves included, it is a very different summary from that of the apostle. Their reckoning makes many classes. They are as numerous as the phases of human society. It is only where the mind is strongly under the influence of divine truth, that the grand distinction of the apostle is realized, and it is then felt in all its solemnity that all men must be distributed either among the children of God or the children of the devil.

Think, then, for a little of this divine distinction. Some are the children of God. They have been born of Him, through the gracious influence of the divine Spirit on their souls. They have been made to pass through a new birth, in which a change has been effected as great as that which took place when they were at first ushered into the present world. They have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. As such they have been received into the family of God. They occupy a position and a relation which they never attained before. They may then be regarded as a component part of those who are described to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." They become as they never were before, "the people of God." They are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Whatever may be their privileges here, their rich inheritance is to be enjoyed hereafter. And they hold their title to it on the ground of their union with Christ. His title and theirs is the same, the everlasting righteousness which he brought in when he died, "the just for the unjust."

This is the one class. But oh! how different is the other! They are "the children of the devil." Like him they have fallen from their original righteousness. They have suffered the consequences of the fatal apostacy into which he seduced their first parents. They have been under his influence ever since they came into the world. They have been "led cap-

tive by him at his will." They have been employed by him to do his pleasure, and accomplish his purposes. He is said to be the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." And if they remain under his dominion they shall share his doom. At death they shall have their portion assigned them with the devil and his angels. They have adopted his cause here and they shall endure his punishment hereafter.

These are the only two classes known to God. To one or other of them all men belong. The Scriptures never recognize any other here. Neither shall any but these be found at the last judgment. There shall be those on the right hand and those on the left, and none beside. To which class do we belong? Surely it behoves us to inquire. And all the more so, since it is assumed in the text, as we now proceed to show—

2. That this distinction may be manifested. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil."

This statement may be understood with reference to ourselves or others. And it may be profitable to contemplate it in both relations.

If we are the children of God this ought to be manifest to ourselves. Observe the frequency with which this sentiment is put forward in this epistle. The following expressions occur throughout it: "We do know that we know him—we know that we are in him—we know that we have passed from death unto life—we know that we are of the truth—we know that he abideth in us—we know that we dwell in him and he in us—he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself—that ye may know that ye have eternal life—we know that we are of God—we are in him that is true." Would it be possible to express the assurance of a living faith more plainly or fully? It is declared in the most varied and unequivocal terms. It is assumed to be the privilege of

the believer, the natural result of his consciousness and experience.

This view is much confirmed when we connect with it the saying of the Apostle Paul, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is a part of the Spirit's work to manifest the believer's safety to him. He so casts light on his own gracious work in his soul as to give satisfaction of its reality.

It is readily admitted this blessed assurance may not in all cases be enjoyed. By some mental or bodily disease the work of grace may be so obscured as to be hidden from the subject of it. The poet Cowper was an example of such a delusion, as is well known to all who are acquainted with his history. Still the natural operation of true conversion is to manifest itself. In no case ought any one to rest short of it. And if there be any one really born of God who does not enjoy a persuasion of it, he will be unhappy, and can never rest until it is attained. If there be contentment without it, that is in itself evidence that the blessed work has never been accomplished in the soul.

It is however its manifestation to others that appears to be specially spoken of in the text. This is clear from the proofs cited in it, and afterwards to be considered. They are such as are cognizable by others. We are not indeed to exclude them in judging of our own state. To a large extent the evidence of conversion to ourselves and to others is the same. In our own case, however, there is consciousness, which cannot be had in the case of others. But in that case there is a countervailing advantage. We judge of others more impartially than we do of ourselves. Our Lord said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And nothing can be plainer than the apostle's statement in the text, "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil" The

sentiment is as reasonable as it is scriptural, and little need be said to confirm it.

The two states in question are the most contrary to one another that can possibly be conceived. On the one side are "the children of God," and on the other, "the children of the devil." Those on the right hand are of Him who is infinitely pure and holy, while those on the left are of him who is the spirit of unmixed evil. They have almost nothing in common. They are directly opposed to one another. Is it not natural that each should manifest itself?

The change from the one to the other is the most marked and decided of which the human mind can be the subject. It is described in the divine Word as a translation from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the power of Satan unto God. It is a change from guilt to pardon, from sin to holiness, from wretchedness to blessedness. "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ: ye are no more strangers and followers, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Might not such a change be expected to be manifest?

Its necessary and habitual operation is a constant testimony to its existence. It is like the ointment that betrays itself. Grace in the heart is ever producing a spirit and deportment that show the source whence they spring. The flowing stream is proof of a living fountain. And if the life be holy there must be a cause that lies deeper than any human purpose.

It is admitted that constituted as society now is, enjoying the advantages of Christian education, there may be difficulties in the way of a correct judgment. Here is a child

born of godly parents, trained with ceaseless care, little exposed to temptation, and kept continually under the best influences. It is easy to conceive how much there may be of the form of religion in such a case without the reality. This, however, ought only to make us the more careful in judging of either ourselves or others. If there be not grace there will be some outbreak of nature that will show the unrenewed heart. It is a far greater difficulty where the mind has been under the influence of grace from childhood, and where consequently no marked change has ever taken place in the outward conduct. It was always good. The difficulty in this case is apt to be felt in the judgment which such a one pronounces on himself. He may not be conscious of the great change, as many are. But others have not difficulty in judging of such a one. They see that the life is right, and they refer it properly to the right cause. In short they acquiesce in the sentiment of the text, "in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil."

In this. In what? This leads us to consider—

3. The evidences by which they are made manifest.

Two are mentioned—"He that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

It is observable that these evidences are put in the negative form, and an important lesson is suggested by it. This is not the way in which we usually present or view the subject. Men are usually satisfied with themselves and others, if there be nothing directly wrong, and glaring, and injurious in their conduct. Harmlessness and blamelessness are apt to be esteemed sufficient. There may be no active well-doing, but the want of it is not supposed to be fatal to the claim of a good character. Now it is not thus the Scriptures speak and judge. The absence of well-doing is held to be sufficient for condemnation. It is not enough that we "cease to do evil," we must "learn to do well." This is assumed by the apostle

in the characteristics of the text. He takes for granted that man is not in the present life merely to do no evil, but to do good. He must not be satisfied that he injures no one, but see to it that he serves his day and generation. Understanding the text so, let us interpret its evidences on this principle—noticing the two in the order in which they are named.

First, “He that doeth not righteousness is not of God.” A man who is not exhibiting righteousness in his deportment, gives no proof that he is born of God. What then are we to understand by righteousness?

The lowest idea we can attach to it is that of watchfulness to avoid any known violation of the law. The righteous man makes it the guide of his life, and he is purposed not to violate it. He knows that to do so is contrary to its claim, to its author’s command, and to his own interests and engagements. He cannot, therefore, allow himself in known sin.

But there is more than this in righteousness, there is an earnest endeavour to meet its demands. The will of God must be done in the various relations of life. Fidelity is essential, whether as husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, neighbour, friend, subject. Many duties must be performed with diligence, perseverance, and zeal. The place assigned to us must be well occupied. The interests entrusted to us must be advanced. The entered into engagements must be discharged.

But even this does not come up to the full idea of a righteous man. There is goodness in him. He is not satisfied because he does not come short of duty, or because he has performed it so as to be above reproach, he is desirous to make himself useful. He would relieve distress. He would further the interests of his fellow-creatures. He would spread happiness around him. He would leave the world better than he found it. Here is an inspired description of him in

the person of Job—"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out."

Let this be the conduct of a man. Let him be watchful to avoid the transgression of the divine law. Let him be zealous to discharge the duties of his place and station. Let him do good according to his opportunity. And in this righteousness he has evidence that he is born of God. "In this the children of God are manifest."

Again, with this general deportment a special grace is associated—"Neither he that loveth not his brother." It is mentioned also with peculiar emphasis. For it is added, "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love another."

In this connexion the duty of brotherly love is represented to occupy a prominent place in the evidences of the new birth. It is a distinguishing badge of the Christian and his profession. "From the beginning" it was inculcated. Even before Christianity, the law that commanded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," required also, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But since Christ came a new publication had been given of the law of brotherly love, a new motive had been furnished for its observance, and a new obligation had been laid on all who were Christ's, to practise it. In it, therefore, eminently "the children of God are manifest."

What are we to understand by it? And how is it exercised? The apostle in his subsequent discourse upon it represents it under a threefold aspect, as the natural affection which should bind brother to brother, instanced in Cain and Abel; as the sympathy that should draw out our hearts to the people of God, by which we know we have passed from death unto life; and as the diffusive spirit of benevolence

that leads us to supply the wants of all as we have means and opportunity. These will come largely before us in subsequent discourses. But in the meantime a few words may be said upon each of them.

Brotherly love includes the exercise of natural affection. If this be wanting, there can be no work of the Spirit. It may be where the Spirit is not, but it cannot be absent where the Spirit dwells. The history of Cain, by which the apostle illustrates his statement, fills us with horror. It is given as a mark of the great apostacy in the New Testament, to be "without natural affection." Christians are bound to cherish it both as the bond of nature and the expression of grace. The Spirit enlightens, refines, elevates, directs, and sanctifies it. All the natural affections are heightened and improved by his influence, not dispensed with or weakened. And of none is this more true than of brotherly love.

Next to the natural affection is the love that binds the child of God to his brother in Christ. They are one family, of which He is the elder brother. As they love Him so do they love one another. They see His image in them, and they are captivated with it. In serving them they know they are serving Him. And they anticipate the hour when it shall be said to them by their judge, "inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

But their love is not confined to them. The Scripture that says, "love the brotherhood," says also, "honour all men." It is as wide as the human family, and diffusive as their necessities. It would feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sad, instruct the ignorant, save the lost. "It suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth

all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Such is brotherly love, embracing the family, the church, and the world. And this is the evidence, associated with righteousness, of which the apostle says, "in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil ; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another," ver. 10-11.

LECTURE XXIII.

“Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not my brethren, if the world hate you.”—1 JOHN iii. 12-13.

THERE is a double blessing in every grace of the Spirit. On the one hand, it prevents much evil and suffering, and on the other it confers not less enjoyment. Take for example the grace of temperance. From how many afflictions does it save its subject, and what benefits does it confer upon him? Or long suffering. From what inflictions it preserves ourselves and others, and what happiness does it secure to both? We are accustomed to say of goodness, that it is twice blessed, in him that gives, and in him that receives. And this is precisely the view in which the apostle presents the grace of brotherly love in the passage before us. He had commended it as one of the sure evidences of a gracious state, excellent in itself, and beneficial to ourselves and others. And in the text, he directs our attention to the evils entailed by the want of it—illustrating the sentiment by a convincing example, “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not my brethren, if the world hate you.”

In seeking to enter into his views, let us consider, 1. the illustrative example, and 2. the reflection founded upon it. And may we have grace to take the warning thus given to us.

I. The apostle illustrates his subject by a reference to the example of Cain. His words are very strong and condemnatory. They contain a searching view of the character, the conduct, and the motives of Cain. Let us notice his representations.

1. His character. "He was of that wicked one." He was one of the "children of the Devil." He inherited his disposition. He was under his influence. He belonged to his party. He did his will. These are statements which cannot be disputed. They are essentially one with the inspired announcement of the text. And they contain some lessons which it is important for us to learn and remember.

They show how Satan may instigate us to crimes which may seem even to be contrary to our nature. Had any one warned Cain of the danger to which he was exposed, there is no doubt he would have treated it as the grossest insult. He would have declared it to be impossible for him ever to be betrayed into such a crime. He would have been conscious of the most nauseating repugnance to a sin so unnatural and vile. Yet he committed it. The fact proves there is no iniquity to which Satan will not prompt, and which he may not one day induce us to perpetrate.

We are therefore farther warned to resist his encroaches upon our minds. They are deceitful and gradual. It was no doubt long before he suggested to Cain the tragic deed which he at length committed. He worked it in upon his mind by slow degrees. He made him brood over his dissatisfaction till his spirit became exasperated and ripened for it. And then, coming upon him in an unguarded moment, with one fierce temptation he hurried him into the sad and irremediable act. We need to be ever watchful against his devices. Let us remember the counsel of the apostle, "be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring

lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith."

2. These lessons are powerfully enforced while we next contemplate the conduct of Cain. "He slew his brother." How shall the deed be designated?

It was unnatural. Cain and Abel had lain in the same womb, been nursed at the same breast, reared on the same lap, fed by the same hand, protected by the same care, taught to pray at the same altar, and exhorted to live for the same eternal home. No doubt all this had been felt, yet it was all overcome. Nature was outraged by the force of violent temptation.

It was irremediable. How truly might it be said of Cain, in the language afterwards used respecting Esau, "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." The deed he did could not be undone. No doubt Satan counted it a mighty triumph for this reason. And we are thus instructed to expect that he will ever endeavour to plunge us into some iniquity that cannot be recalled.

It was extreme in its enormity. We cannot give life, and without a divine permission we should not take it away. But here was the life of a fellow-creature which Cain was bound to protect as his own; the life of a reasonable and immortal being who, the moment the soul was separated from the body, appeared at the bar of his eternal judge; the life of a brother in whose sports he had spent his childhood, and with whose developing strength of body and mind he had grown up to the maturity of manhood. Even our minds recoil at the enormity of the offence. What then must it have been in the eye of God?

It was a sin which once committed ensures the bitterness of the offender's future life. Cain soon found reason to cry, "my punishment is greater than I can bear." No doubt Satan sought to persuade him repentance was vain, and for-

givenness impossible. He would urge him on to fresh criminality as the only way of beguiling the time, and of hardening his mind against bitter and unavailing reflections. How far he succeeded is not given to us to know. The future of Cain is left in deep obscurity. But enough has been told us to show us the nature of Satan's devices. He will try to urge us to a crime which may deter us from thinking of the mercy of God, and urge us to a spirit of hopeless despondency or hardened criminality. If we are put on our guard against this deception, the sin of Cain will not have been recorded for us in vain.

3. But how are we to account for it? This leads us to notice the motive to which it is ascribed in the text. "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

The particular provocation by which he was urged to the bloody deed is most simply but graphically described in the inspired narrative of the transaction. It is contained in Gen. iv. 3-8. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

From this passage, united with the remarks of the Apostle in the text, we may fully understand the mind of Cain. It was envy that first moved him to the unparalleled iniquity.

His offering was rejected, while Abel's was accepted. He was mortified by the distinction, and would be avenged. It is very instructive to mark the progress of his mind under the influence of his envious feelings. The first notice is, "He was wroth." He met the unexpected disappointment with a burst of anger. It is then added, "His countenance fell." That fit of passion fell down into a sullen melancholy, musing by turns on the injustice of God, and the fraud of his brother, as no doubt he considered them. But his gloomy apprehensions were not unchecked. God remonstrated with him, probably by the whispers of his own conscience, or it may have been audibly and visibly. He was called upon to give a reason for his malevolent feelings. A faithful remonstrance was addressed to him, "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?" At the same time he was faithfully warned, "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door," which seems to mean that it lay there ready to entrap and destroy him, as an enemy that waited for his halting. Even the special enormity that began to assume some shape in his mind, seems to have been set before him to deter him against indulging the dark forebodings that cast their deadly shade over his spirit. "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." But it was in vain. He allowed the wicked one to harass and harden his soul more and more. An opportunity offered to carry his design into execution. "Cain talked with Abel his brother, and they were in the field." We may well suppose he addressed him in terms of bitter accusation. His fierce recriminations were uttered in the silence of the solitary field. That very silence whispered, now is the seasonable time to be avenged for all the dishonour God has done thee in the preference of this hated brother. No eye shall see it. No ear shall hear it. No tongue shall tell it. So "he rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

What an instructive history! It is the progress of envy till it ended in fratricide. It began with anger, proceeded in morose dissatisfaction, overcame the remonstrances of conscience, withstood the most solemn warnings, was goaded on to hatred and revenge, and seizing the favourable opportunity, terminated in murder.

We need to be watchful over the movements of our own minds. Impressions may be guided or removed if early dealt with, but if they are allowed to strengthen, it is impossible to restrain them. We may be borne away by them as by a resistless torrent. Especially is this the case with severe or wounded feelings towards others. Derangements of mind have grown, not unfrequently, out of an imagination of injurious treatment. On the first temptation of disappointment, or anger, or ill-will, or malevolence, we should take ourselves to task, and see that our minds are brought under the due influence of reason, and truth, and godliness. If not, envy may find a place there, and gradually advance to hatred, and malice and revenge, till it end fatally with us, as it did with Cain, in the irremediable ruin of ourselves or others. So felt the apostle, and hence, when he cited the example of Cain, he followed it up with what we shall proceed to consider—

II. A reflection founded upon it—"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

To enter rightly into this lesson, it is necessary to observe particularly one marked feature in the character of Cain, contrasted with another in that of Abel, and which were unhappily brought into collision. Worldliness predominated in Cain, and godliness in Abel. Cain was a proud man, and could not brook that another should be preferred before him. Abel was humble, and neither sought nor affected any superiority, yet it was awarded to him. Thus the worldliness of Cain came into contact and collision with the godliness of

Abel. We may easily imagine how he regarded it. No doubt he stigmatized it as a mean hypocrisy. He hated it. He counted himself as good, if not a better man than he, and probably did not hesitate to say so. The silent endurance of Abel only provoked him the more. And it was probably when he could not provoke him to contend and to render railing for railing, that he could restrain his rage no more, and rose up and slew him.

It is herein we discover the basis of the lesson that is before us. The world, of which Cain was a type, hates the godly, who are represented by Abel. Its dislike of godliness is transferred to those who are the subjects of it, and hence the warning, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Let us inquire into the reasons of this counsel.

1. Surely, then, they who know the history of the world and the church should not marvel. It begins with Cain and Abel. The worldly spirit could not be restrained even while there were only born brothers on the earth, and not men sufficient to till the ground. Literally then, as afterwards, a man's foes were those of his own house. But this was only the type of what lay in the womb of time. The same spirit has appeared in all ages, in all places, and under all circumstances. It was seen in Ishmael when he mocked Isaac. It appeared in the brethren of Joseph when they said, "Behold this dreamer cometh," and they hated and sold him. So with the king of Israel who said unto Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imleh, by whom we may enquire of the Lord ; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Remember the feelings of Jezebel also toward Elijah, and how she vowed to destroy him. In the same way we must explain the devices of the courtiers at Babylon against Daniel, when they said, "We shall find no fault against this man, except it be concerning the law of his God." We all know the treatment

which Jeremiah received from the great men of Jerusalem. But what were all these compared with the treatment of the Son of God? "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." They cried, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." "He was despised and rejected of men." There was in Him everything to attract, but it only repelled. He wanted nothing to engage love, but it provoked only hatred. And as it was with Himself, so He gave His followers to understand it should be with them. He said, "If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you." "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord ; if they have persecuted me they will also persecute you." These warnings were abundantly realized in the history of the apostles and the sufferings of the early churches. So also in all subsequent ages. The contest between the world and the church has never ceased. It has been carried on upon the wide theatre of nations, the narrower scene of communities, within the circle of friends, and in the bosom of families. History has corresponded with prophecy. In the prediction of coming sorrows to His people, Jesus showed He was a true prophet, and would practise no deception ; and in the history of what they have endured, there is a confirmation of the faith that is in Him. All, therefore, who have heard the voice of prophecy, and attended to the details of history, may well receive the apostle's words, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

2. The causes of the enmity of the world to the church remain as they were at the beginning, and therefore we should not wonder at it. These are numerous, and we can only name them.

One is the exclusive claim of truth. It asserts its own supremacy. The gospel is true, and it only. Its testimony is, "if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that

which ye have received, let him be accursed." Error will be satisfied if it is tolerated. It will consent that truth stand by it if it is not denounced. But this the truth refuses. "He that is not with me," says Christ, "is against me." This is intolerable to the world, and it hates the assertion of it.

Another cause is the nature of the truth asserted. The apostle said, "we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The gospel offers a way of salvation that gives no credit to man. "Boasting is excluded." Eternal life is the gift of God. This is hard to be received. It is rejected and hated by the blindness and pride of the world.

We must add, the life which the gospel requires is still more offensive than the ground on which it offers salvation. The apostle has well expressed this sentiment, saying, "they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." The life of godliness, as demanded by the religion of Christ, is counted severe and repulsive. It is curious, but still more instructive, to observe that they who blame the gospel with allowing no part to man in securing his own salvation are the very same who find fault with the strictness of its required deportment. Its high claims especially are an offence, because they are felt to be a condemnation. They will not be conceded, and therefore they are hated. The word says, "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are his." It says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Of such the world says, "these are hard sayings, who can hear them." Well therefore might the apostle, who knew

well what the world was, utter the warning—"marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

3. Important purposes are served by the hatred of the world, and therefore we need not wonder at it.

It belongs to God to make the wrath of man to praise him. He brings good out of evil, light out of darkness, and joy out of sorrow. The enmity of the world is over-ruled in many ways.

It shows what man is. Be his advantages what they may, true to his depraved nature, his "mind is enmity against God." In the midst of light he walks in darkness. And while all things invite him to be holy he chooses to be sinful.

Thus the grace of God is exalted. That alone can change the human heart. It can and does. God says, "my grace is sufficient for thee." It is so to begin, uphold, and consummate the work of holiness. Of every subject of it, it may be said, "they glorified God in me."

At the same time the believer is thus subjected to a wholesome influence. As he is useful and holy so does the world watch him with a malignant eye. He needs to remember the injunction, "watch unto prayer." And as he does so he is carried forward in all righteous and gracious attainments.

What glory will thus at last redound to God through every redeemed soul ! It will be seen to have been kept, as a spark is preserved in the midst of the ocean. It will be as the three Hebrews, brought in safety out of the burning fiery furnace, because the Son of man was there to keep it unhurt.

With two counsels, therefore, let us conclude.

1. Do not fear the world. With Cain it may persecute the righteous Abel. But the God of Abel lives and has prepared mansions of rest and glory above. "In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." "Fear not them that kill the body, but are

not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

2. Do not provoke the world. "Give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." "With well-doing put him to silence." "Shew thyself a pattern of good works ; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity ; sound speech, that cannot be condemned ; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." Titus ii. 7, 8.

LECTURE XXVI.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—1 JOHN iii. 14.

AIR and earth, fire and water, good and evil, light and darkness, are not more contrary the one to the other, than are the people of the world and the true members of the church. Their views are contrary, the one class looking at the things of eternity merely in the light of time, and the other looking at time in the light of eternity. Their tastes are contrary, the one being "of the earth, earthy," the other spiritually minded. Their pursuits are contrary, the one "walking according to the course of this world," the other "walking with God." Their destiny shall be contrary—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." They are severally characterized by the apostle as "the children of the devil, and the children of God."

It was such a contrast as this that must have been in the mind of the apostle when he used the language of the text, in connexion with that which preceded it. He had said, "marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." True Christians, he gave them to understand, might be objects of hatred to the world. But on the contrary, to one another they would be objects of love. So universal and marked would this brotherly love be, that he pronounces it to be a distinguishing mark and evidence of a sound conversion.

This is the sentiment of the text, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

There are three things noticeable in these words:—1. The change described, "We have passed from death unto life." 2. The evidence of that change, "Because we love the brethren." And 3. The comfortable assurance of it, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Let us consider these apart, and may we all attain to this blessedness!

I. "We have passed from death unto life."

Let it be carefully observed this is a change which is declared to have already taken place. "We have passed." And the same sentiment is still more forcibly and fully expressed by the same apostle in his gospel in chapter v. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." These he records as the words of the Lord Jesus. It is plain they are intended to impress and explain the idea, that salvation is a present attainment, secured by faith in Christ. Whenever a sinner believes he is put in possession of everlasting life, that is, of the germ or beginning of it. This germ is of such a kind that it must be finally and fully developed. He in whom it is can never be brought into a state of condemnation and sin again. On the contrary, "he is passed from death unto life," and that condition can never be forfeited or recalled.

The words are expressive, however, not merely of a change that is supposed to be past in point of time, but of one most blessed in its nature. What is so much shunned as death? And what is so prized and preserved as life? Then this change consists in a deliverance from the one and the pos-

session of the other. It is to pass from a condition of death to that of life. How are we to understand it?

1. Death is used in the Scriptures to express a state of condemnation, and life one of acceptance. In the one case there is a sentence of death, and in the other of acquittal. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned." The words must be understood of a sentence of death, because it was not yet fully executed: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so hath grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." "By one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." In these weighty passages death and judgment, or condemnation, are used as convertible terms, while life and acceptance, or favour, are understood as synonymous. In this view, therefore, to pass from death unto life is to obtain the pardon of sin. Observe that criminal. He stands before his judge. The accusation is laid against him. The witnesses are heard. The charge is proved, and the sentence of death is passed. But lo! ere it is executed, the king is besought to extend his royal mercy. He hearkens to the request, and grants a pardon. It is appropriate to say of such a man, he passes from death unto life. Just so is it with the sinner. He has been tried, found guilty, and condemned to die. But pardon is sought and is granted, and needs only to be accepted. When he is induced to accept of it, it may well be said of him, he has "passed from death unto life."

2. Death is also used in the Scriptures to express a condi-

tion of sinfulness or depravity, and life that of holiness. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." In all these passages it is a moral change that is spoken of. It is a change not merely of state, but of character. And how fitting is the description ! The sinner is pronounced to be dead ; and is he not so ? He has all the features of death upon him. There is *insensibility*. He is in sin, and ever committing it, but he does not seem to be conscious of it. The blasphemer will take the name of God in vain, and urge for his excuse that he was not conscious of committing the crime. There is *inactivity*. He possesses powers which he does not employ. He has eyes, but they do not discern God in His works or word. He has ears, but he does not hear Him in the dispensations of His hand or the lessons of His providence. He has a tongue, but he neither speaks with Him in prayer, nor for Him to man. He has hands, but they are not active to do His will. He has feet, but they do not walk in the way of His commandments. The man is dead in sin. On the other hand, it is the office of grace to make him alive to God. When it does effectually operate upon him this is the result. His eyes are opened to see God, and he cries, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." His ears are unstopped, and he exclaims, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." His tongue is unloosed, and it may be said, "Behold he prayeth." His hands are engaged, so that he "becomes not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." And his "feet are shod with the preparation of the

Gospel of peace." The sinner is made "alive to God." You have seen the oak struck by the lightning of heaven. Its juices were dried up, and its branches withered away. You pronounced it dead. But the husbandman came; he lopped off the withered boughs. He manured its roots and watered its branches. The process of decay was arrested. Life was restored. It sent forth its foliage and bore its fruit as before. It was a resurrection. So it is with the sinner under the blight of sin, when he is visited by the grace of the Spirit. His decayed powers are animated with a new life. He puts forth the powers in active energy, which before were paralyzed in spiritual death. He is "passed from death unto life."

This is the change described in the text. It is worthy of remark that wherever it is effected, it is associated with faith in Jesus Christ, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Wherever there is faith, there is pardon. Wherever there is faith there is purity. It unites to Christ, and that union secures at once pardon and holiness. Then and thus there is life.

All blessings are comprehended in this blessing. Till it is gained, we have nothing worth possessing, and which can be really enjoyed. When once this is gained, we have "the one thing needful." With what earnestness should it be sought and secured? We should not rest until "we know that we have passed from death unto life." And how shall we know it? This leads us to consider,—

II. The evidence spoken of in the text, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Brotherly love is the proof of conversion here cited by the apostle.

How, then, are we to understand it? If we look to the immediate context, we should say, that by "the brethren" we are to mean the people of God. The apostle had said, in the

verse preceding the text, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." He clearly understands "you" to mean you, disciples and friends of the Lord Jesus. Then, in contrast to the men of the world, and their treatment of the godly, he pronounces the text, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We love those whom this world hates, the friends and followers of Christ. "The brethren" therefore in that view must mean such. Still, the apostle had just before spoken of the hatred of Cain toward Abel, as a proof of the want of brotherly love, and in that instance there must have been the want of the natural affection, which should bind brothers together, as well as the love due to a godly man. And immediately after the text, we find him speaking of that love which urges us to supply the want of the needy, and which goes out to the wicked and worthless, as well as to the godly. In truth, the apostle seems to treat of brotherly love indiscriminately as the natural but sanctified affection which comprehends those that are our brethren according to the flesh, those that are spiritually united to us as members of the family of Christ, and all mankind. We shall therefore now consider the grace in this extended application, and show how in these three forms it is evidence of our having "passed from death unto life."

1. There is the natural affection which binds us to those with whom we are allied according to the flesh. It is true there may be this love when there is no grace. There is often strong natural affection, where there is no gracious disposition. In that case brotherly love is no proof of the great change of which we have spoken. Yet there is a way in which it does become such. If there be in us an ardent and burning desire for the conversion and salvation of our earthly relatives, it is a good sign of a work of grace in our own souls. When the natural affection is powerfully excited by the re-

ligious principles, it is thus obviously sanctified by the Spirit of God. Many beautiful examples of the exercise of this grace are recorded in the Scriptures. When Andrew discovered Christ, his first impulse was to find his brother Simon, and tell him, "we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." So when Philip was called to follow Christ, he immediately went in search of Nathanael, and saith unto him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." It is the same spirit that may be seen in the parent, when he says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you;" that is seen in the brother and the sister intensely desiring the spiritual good of brothers and sisters;—in short, that appears in any earthly relation stimulated by the interest that naturally associates us with it. As this affection of nature is sanctified it furnishes evidence of our state in every effort that it makes for the spiritual and eternal good of those with whom we are allied. On the other hand, if we are indifferent to the spiritual interests of those with whom God has connected us by the ties of the present life, there can be no more distinct proof that we are not ourselves partakers of the grace of God. We cannot, in that application, appropriate the text and say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

2. The evidence arising from the exercise of brotherly love towards the people of God is still more unequivocal. It may be sometimes difficult to distinguish between the natural and gracious affection in the case of those who are closely allied to us. But where we love the godly, simply because they are such, the proof is unequivocal. Its peculiarity is that, apart from other considerations, our love is attracted by their godliness. We see the image of Christ in them, and we recognise it and love it. "Whosoever loveth him that begat loveth

him also that is begotten of him." The reason and measure of our love to God are the reason and measure of our love to them. It matters not whether they are poor or rich, learned or ignorant, their holiness is the one thing that is discerned, and on account of which our hearts are knit to them in love. The affection is in reality not more engaged with them than it is with Christ their master. We hold fellowship with them, and with Him in them. We desire to converse with them, and pray with them, and if need be to serve them in love. This last exercise is noticed by Christ with great approval. He says, "Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall in nowise lose his reward." And in His description of the final judgment He makes this feature to have a prominent place in His approved ones. When He says, "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was naked and ye clothed me, I was sick and in prison and ye came unto me,"—He explains Himself by saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me." To love others because they are holy is to love holiness itself. To serve them because they are Christ's is to serve Christ Himself. And as we do so we may appropriate the text and say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

3. Still, love is not to be confined to them. It is to be extended to all men. And as it is so we strengthen the evidence of our gracious state. This is what God exemplified when He regarded a race of sinners and provided for their temporal and eternal good. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This is what Christ required when He said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father

which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." As God acts toward you, so do you toward others. This is what Christ did. He was born, He lived, He died for sinful men. This therefore must be an eminent mark of all who are His. They must count all men their brethren in the sense of needing and having a claim on their services. Therefore they instruct the ignorant, they comfort the mourning, they supply the need of the destitute, they labour to save the lost. Nothing will satisfy them, but to see all men happy and holy. Their ardent prayers and self-denying labours are bent on the promised consummation when "all nations shall be blessed in Jesus, and all nations shall call him blessed." And just as this is their spirit they may say, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

It is this threefold exercise of the grace of love that constitutes the evidence of our discipleship. The one is not incompatible with the other. We may love our kindred with special love. That will not hinder the peculiar affection due to the people of God. Nor will this forbid the deep and tender interest which we must take in the happiness of all mankind. These are but the outgoings of the same holy principle, the streams that flow from the fountain of a sanctified heart, the "labours of love." Let us cherish them and so will be our evidence that we have believed to the saving of our souls.

III. It only remains to notice the assurance of our salvation, arising out of this evidence. "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

We may know it then. This is assumed. The term is the most expressive of certainty that could be used. It is not, we think or hope or desire, but we know. Through the whole

Epistle this is the apostle's mode of speaking. He never doubts but it is a privilege which the believer may attain, to have a comfortable assurance of his own salvation.

He ought to know it. It is not a privilege merely, but a duty. He ought to know it for the sake of his own holiness. Then only can he say, "the joy of the Lord is our strength." He ought to know it for the sake of others. Then only can he recommend religion to them by the happiness it has conferred on him. He ought to know it for the honour of Christ. It glorifies Him when His people obey the command, "rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice."

At the same time we learn what to do that we may know it. It is, as we have seen, by abounding in the exercise of brotherly love. No doubt there is the evidence of consciousness. No doubt there is the special work of the Spirit, "witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God." But all other evidence is dependent on this evidence, in so far, that without it they are of no avail. Nay, it is as it exists they are rendered more clear. Abound in holy love and so consciousness of its existence will be less doubtful, and the testimony of the Spirit will be more distinct. God has so ordered it, that the claims of active well-doing may be the more regarded. In the healthful activities of love we have its rich enjoyment. "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

LECTURE XXV.

“He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”—

1 JOHN iii. 14-16.

THE apostle had said in the 10th verse, “in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” While righteousness is the general evidence of discipleship, brotherly love is specified as a prominent feature of that righteousness. Thus singled out from among the graces it is largely explained and enforced. In the 11th verse it is pronounced to have been enjoined “from the beginning.” It is as old as the relation of man to man. In the 12th verse the want of it is denounced by the citation of the example of Cain who slew his brother. In the beginning of the 14th verse, it is declared to be an unequivocal evidence of “having passed from death unto life.” And now in the text, other views and arguments are employed to recommend the same grace. 1. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” 2. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” And 3. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the

brethren." It is observable how every one of these arguments encreases in strength beyond that which preceded it. Together they constitute a powerful pleading for the duty of brotherly love. Let us try to enter into them. And may the Lord enable us to apprehend and obey them !

I. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

The very form of this statement demands attention. It charges as a crime the want of a grace and not merely the perpetration of evil. It is not that a wrong has been done, but that a good has not been rendered. It is sin under the form of a want of conformity to the law, not a transgression of it.

This style of accusation demands attention, because we are apt to be satisfied so long as we are not guilty of some overt act of injury to others. Many are at ease in their own minds, because they are not conscious of having injured others, who ought to be alarmed, because they have not served others. It is not enough that we "cease to do evil," for we must also "learn to do well."

This lesson is doubly enforced by the passage before us, both in the view it gives of the grace that is wanted, and the fearful inference drawn from that condition. Let both be noticed.

1. The complaint is, "he that loveth not his brother." He is devoid of the natural affection which close affinity should create, or if it is in existence, it is ill directed. Instead of seeking those advantages which would really serve his brother, he limits his regard merely to those earthly gratifications which perish in the using. As for counting any one a brother because he is a child of God, although he has no earthly relationship to him, he neither apprehends the idea, nor is sensible of any obligation upon him, arising out of it. Instead of holiness being felt to give another, a special claim upon him, it is rather calculated to create a prejudice in his mind

against him. He is suspicious of those who are esteemed the godly. And as to such as may neither be related to him by any earthly affinity, nor commended to him by their unwonted excellence, what has he to do with them, or they with him? He acts by them in the true spirit of Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He never saw them, and it may be, never expects to see them in the flesh. Why then should he concern himself with them? As to thinking of them, planning for them, labouring to impart to them some substantial good, sacrificing time, and health, and substance for their benefit, going himself, or sending others to them, to instruct, and elevate, and save them, it is no concern of his. If they live, well; if they die, it is equally well. To him it is a matter of indifference how it fares with them. He can attend only to his own business. Gallio-like, he cares for none of these things. Now this is he of whom it is said in the verse before us, "he loveth not his brother."

2. Observe then the condition in which such a one is pronounced to be. He "abideth in death." There is great force in the words, and they demand a serious consideration.

His condition is supposed to be the most deplorable. Death is the term that is used to describe it. It is descriptive at once of his guilt and depravity, and his insensibility to both. His guilt is such that he stands condemned by his judge. Sentence of condemnation is already passed upon him. His conduct is deeply criminal. He is disregarding alike the commands of God, and the claims of his fellow-creature. And yet he is all the while insensible to both his danger and his duty. He does not know that he has provoked God by his neglect of man. He is surprised or perhaps offended if any one should tell him of his real position. "He abideth in death."

Let it not be supposed this is an exaggerated statement of the case. Suppose you saw a parent indifferent to the well-

being of his child. The child is helpless, or sick, or hungry, or naked, and he passes on as if this were no concern of his. Let the child, he says, look to itself. Or you find a similar deportment in husbands towards wives or wives towards husbands, or brothers and sisters towards one another. What would be your thoughts on such a discovery of what you would consider to be the most cruel hard-heartedness and inhumanity? You would say such persons were dead to every right perception and feeling. You would condemn them, and pronounce them vile, and your denunciation would rise in proportion to their unconcern. Stay, then, and consider the matter a little more at large. How many are there to whom it may be said, "Thou art the man." Who is my brother? Is it he only who has been born of the same mother? This is not the definition of the Scriptures. Remember our Lord's parable of the good Samaritan. It was the stranger's sympathy that drew forth His commendation. That was His answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" He taught it was every man who needed our help. "All ye are brethren." "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth." Every man born of a woman is a brother. He has the claims, and we owe him the duty of a brother. Some have these claims increased beyond others, either by the closeness of earthly affinity or spiritual sympathies; but all have a just demand upon us. They who are not sensible to it, who do not own it or render it, "abide in death."

Mark the emphasis of the phrase, "*abideth* in death." Such a one was and continues to be dead. So long as brotherly love is wanting, he gives proof that he continues as he was by nature, "dead in trespasses and sins." It is felt in the very first pulse of spiritual life. The moment a sinner feels the power of the truth and is quickened by it, so as to become alive unto God, he is made sensible of the motions of

brotherly love. He feels himself bound by a new tie to his earthly friends, and a deep concern seizes him for their spiritual interests. His heart goes out in the tenderest emotions towards those who are the people of God. He counts them "the excellent of the earth." And he yearns over the whole human family, deeply solicitous to see every man blessed, as he has been blessed himself. Whatever he can he will do for their temporal good. But it is the good of the soul he aims at above all. So long as this Spirit is wanted, he is without evidence that he has himself passed from death unto life. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

This is the apostle's first argument for brotherly love in the text, let us now consider the second—

II. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

This statement is stronger than the former. That was negative, while this is positive. That consisted in withholding what was due, this in the infliction of evil. There it was "he that loveth not his brother," here it is, "he that hateth his brother." Of the one it was said, "he abideth in death," he remaineth as he was from the beginning in sin; of the other, "he is a murderer," and it is assumed as the condition of such a one, "ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." We are reminded in this comparative statement of the progress of sin. It is never stationary. The want of a grace will soon become the germ of a great sin. The man that loveth not his brother will soon learn to hate his brother. In finding out arguments to justify his neglect, he will not fail to discover reasons to inflame his hatred. He does nothing for him, and in excusing his indifference he meets with provocations to do him an injury. Let us then enter a little into this still worse condition of mind.

“He hateth his brother.” It is quite possible to hate many things connected with a man, and yet not hate himself. David says, “Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee, and am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies.” His strong statement contains its own explanation. The thing that he hated in those men was, that they rose up against God. And he identifies his hatred with grief. This is very different from the hatred of a brother denounced by the apostle. It consists in regarding him with dislike, in turning away from him with aversion, and in refusing to render him any kind service, while pleasure is found in his hurt. It was seen in Cain toward his brother Abel, in the sons of Jacob toward Joseph, in Ishmael toward Isaac, and in Paul toward the disciples of the Lord Jesus, when he went from Jerusalem to Damascus, breathing threatening and slaughter against them. We must add that in its highest form of aggravation, it appeared in the Jews against Christ, when they not only hated Him as one that interfered with their prejudices and prospects, but chiefly as embodying a life of perfect holiness, they nauseated and rejected Him, and clamoured for His life to be taken away, and were never satisfied until He was crucified. Such is he that hateth his brother.

Of such a one the apostle does not hesitate to say, “he is a murderer.” The term is strong, but not too strong. It is in accordance with our Lord’s interpretation of the divine law. “Ye have heard that it has been said of them of old time, thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” What would

He have said of him that hateth his brother? He does charge him, by his beloved apostle, with murder. This is He who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men. He sees the source and the tendency of hatred. It springs out of a depraved heart and prompts to the most fatal injury. It may neither use the words nor lift the arm of the murderer, and yet indulge or manifest his spirit. A desire to injure is of the spirit of murder. This is true whether it be the injury of life, or property, or purity, or character. So he judges who looketh on the heart.

The conclusion of the apostle, therefore, respecting such a one is irresistible—"Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." No man who indulges hatred can be a possessor of the divine life. The two things are incompatible and cannot dwell together. The one must expel the other.

How important is the assumption on which the conclusion of the apostle is founded. It is that there are some who have eternal life abiding in them. They have life. They have been born again of the Spirit. They have eternal life. The life begun in the soul by the spirit shall never perish. It abideth in them. It is maintained by the same Being who produced it. This is their present portion, and it is the earnest of an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

To all this he that hateth his brother is a stranger. He has no divine life, but is dead, under the sentence of condemnation and the power of sin. He has no enduring principle, but is the sport of his own evil passions and the prey of evil spirits. His portion is in this life, and dying under the power of evil affections, where Jesus is he cannot come, and with the spirits of just men made perfect, he can have no communion in the land of uprightness.

These views, the apostle assumes, must commend themselves

to all men who are right minded. They are consonant alike with Scripture and reason. They approve themselves to all [who will calmly and fairly consider them. And we are constrained to acquiesce in the appeal—"Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

This is the apostle's second argument for brotherly love, and now we proceed to the third—

III. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

This is the strongest argument yet advanced. It is drawn from the conduct of God Himself, and from the obligation that rests on us to be followers of Him as dear children. It is true the word God is not in the original, as we are reminded by the faithful translators who have used a form of letter that reminds us of this fact. It is, however, properly supplied, for the statement is a true one that God laid down His life for us, if that be properly understood. "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." It is not taught that the divine nature suffered or died, for it is not capable of either. But it is taught that the man Christ Jesus, in whom the divine nature dwelt, did both suffer and die. Or suppose we leave out the supplemented word altogether and adhere rigidly to the original. Then the reading is, "hereby perceive we love." It is in the great fact that the Son of God laid down His life for us, that we learn what the grace of love is, and what it can both suffer and do. It is the same view that is presented by this apostle in another place, when he says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for us." Even taking this view of the rendering of the passage there is something very peculiar in the style of it. "He laid down his life for us." There is no apparent antecedent to

“he.” Yet we all know who is meant. This is common with the apostle. He often speaks of Christ without naming Him, taking it for granted all will know no other can be meant, because what is said will apply to no other. Viewed, therefore, in any light, the great example here presented to us is the death of Jesus that thus sinners might live for ever.

Is not this the argument of arguments? Christ Himself has said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” But Paul puts it more strongly, and says, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Look then, either at the love of God in giving His Son, or the love of the Son in giving Himself, and say is it not hereby we perceive love, what it is in its nature, and what it can endure for its objects? “Many waters cannot quench love neither can the floods drown it.” “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life.” Jesus so loved the world, that He gave His soul an offering for sin. He took our nature. In that nature He took our place. In that place He suffered the penalty of the law, and met all its demands. He was made under it, and He “magnified it and made it honourable.” “He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” And so He presented a demonstration of love to men and angels, such as the intelligent universe had never seen before, and shall never witness again. It will indeed be the theme of adoring wonder to redeemed men and angels throughout eternity. Its praises will fill the courts of heaven. One cry will echo there for ever, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

This is the example which the apostle presents for our imitation. This is his great argument for brotherly love. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the

brethren." Do not say this is too high a demand. Circumstances have arisen, and may again arise to demand it. The apostles laid down their lives, and they did right. The martyrs laid down theirs, and they did right. Patriots have done it. Soldiers have done it. Men of letters have done it. And Christians should do it too. Let them do it rather than sacrifice truth. Let them do it that they may spread the truth in distant and inhospitable climes. Let them do it in hard and earnest labours, that will consume their strength, till zeal for the house of God hath eaten them up. Let them manifest the spirit of self-sacrifice always, in their generous contributions, their disinterested toils, their deep and constant concern for the glory of God, and the good of men. Yes ! Whenever they feel the power of the love of God they will do so. They who refuse to act so, show they do not perceive the love of God. They are selfish. They need to learn the great lesson, the "love of Christ constraineth us." O ! come and learn it from this model. Come and see here what brotherly love is, and can do, and suffer. Come and look and learn till you can say, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us ; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Amen.

LECTURE XXVI.

“ But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth.”—1 JOHN iii. 17, 18.

WHEN the Apostle Paul appealed to the Corinthians on behalf of the suffering saints at Jerusalem, he said, “ shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love.” This is precisely the sentiment of James also, when he writes, “ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding we give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit ?” In the same spirit John urges his appeal in the verses before us. He had been enforcing the duty of brotherly love, and having sufficiently explained its nature, and the reasons for its exercise, he requires a proof of its reality in substantial acts of kindness. His words are well chosen. “ Whoso hath this world's good,”—he speaks only of such as possess it. “ And seeth his brother have need,”—he has had satisfactory evidence of his distress. “ And shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.” His first impulse was to give relief, but he withstood it, and suppressed the rising sympathy. “ How dwelleth the love of God in him ?” It does not dwell in him. “ Let us not love in word, neither in

tongue," in the mere verbal expression of it ; " but in deed and in truth," in the substantial acts to which love prompts us. In a word, the apostle requires that the profession of brotherly love shall be proved by the unequivocal evidence of a generous contribution to relieve the wants of others. This is the sentiment to which your attention is now solicited.

In illustrating and enforcing it there is one thought suggested by the apostle which shall be sufficient to guide us. It is the example of God of which he had just before spoken. Let us observe His works towards us, and thence learn what should be our conduct towards others.

1. First, then, there is a lesson in the very work of creation. God did not need to make the worlds. He was infinitely happy in Himself. The Godhead for ever rejoiced in its own glory. Yet the Lord "created the heavens and the earth." Why so? We can conceive of no reason, but that in subserviency to His own glory He might impart of His own blessedness to the creatures whom He called into existence. It is plain from the history of creation, that Jehovah delighted in it. As it progressed, He paused in several stages of it, and pronounced it good. When all was completed, we are informed, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." Everything was made susceptible of yielding or enjoying happiness. Goodness was written on every department of it. The great fact of the creation, therefore, considering what it was when God made it, is a demonstration of the law of love, and of its obligation on His intelligent offspring.

2. This demonstration, however, is presented to us in a still more impressive form, in His works of providence. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." It is this constant

lesson that providence is teaching us. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things ; to whom be glory." He upholds, preserves, and guides the world which He has made. His care is as manifest in the one as His power and wisdom in the other. Especially is our attention arrested by the extraordinary and never-failing arrangements by which He supplies the necessities of living creatures. He has found their food, qualified them to provide it, and adapted it to all their tastes and comforts. It might be supposed that emergencies would arise to interrupt the needed supply, and by some accident cause the creatures that were dependent on it to perish. But, with some limited exceptions, no such fatality has ever befallen the creation. Providence has not permitted it. We may sing with David, "The eyes of all wait upon thee ; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." We live on this bounty. We are surrounded with the blessings of this providence. To it we owe the food we eat, the raiment with which we are clothed, the air we breathe, the sleep by which we are refreshed, health, peace, and competence. What men ought we to be, living in an atmosphere such as this ? If we partake aught of the Spirit by which we are constantly surrounded, surely we must feel that we are part of a creation that is designed to be continually reflecting its own blessedness upon others.

3. This thought, however, may be presented more vividly by observing the special objects of the creation with which we are conversant. We look *above us*, and what do we behold ? "The greater light to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night." What ideas we associate with the sun ! He shines to give us light, and he warms us with his beams. He ripens the fruits of the earth, and he fills the world with happiness. When he is withdrawn, it is that the weary may have rest. Meantime the moon supplies its place, and affords

the measure of enlightenment necessary for human preservation. We look *down* and what do we behold? The earth with all the productions of its bosom, and the beauties and blessings that lie profusely on its surface. Out of it we dig the precious metals for the various purposes of life. By its cultivation we secure sustenance for man and beast. Its trees and plants furnish shelter, and nourishment, and comforts numberless. The more we learn of them the more we discover they were made for the good of man. Between the *heavens* above and the *earth* beneath there is constant intercourse. Earth is ever sending up its vapours to form the cloudy pillars above us. And these are sent down again to refresh and water the earth and make it fruitful. The *sea* comes to our shores and bears its burthens from other climes, that by a friendly interchange of the blessings of life the happiness of all may be abundantly enlarged. Nothing has been made in vain. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Everything it contains appears to have a mission, and that mission is to minister to the well-being of the creatures that are upon it. These witnesses are ever before us. We may well say, "God hath not left himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." We may well say, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom thou hast made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!" What, then, should be the impression in such a contemplation? Surely man is not made to be an exception to the law of the divine goodness. Surely he also has a mission to fulfil, and that must be in harmony with the whole creation. God made him as He made everything beside to do good, and serve his generation.

4. But this leads us to view the subject under another aspect. We proceed to consider the work of God in redemption. This is His great work. For it the others appear to

have been made. The earth was at the first created and was preserved till the fulness of time, when it should be the theatre of this strange work. It is a work on which the inscription is legibly written, "God is love." Every part of it is a mystery of grace. We can only pause for a little on some of its leading features.

Notice the very principle on which it is based. It is thus expressed by an inspired apostle, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." God was pleased to take occasion from man's sin to glorify His own grace. The very sin and sorrow of man afforded the opportunity to display the love that otherwise must have lain hid for ever in His own bosom. Its exhibition took the angels of glory by surprise. They had seen nothing like it in the history of the universe before. "They desire to look into it," we are told. "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." At the very outset, therefore, here is a lesson of transcendent value to men. If they are to act by others on the principle upon which God has acted toward them, they must embrace the sins and sufferings of others as opportunities of rendering them service. This very principle, too, let it be observed, is enjoined upon them. Christ has said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." As God acts by you, so be it your rule to act by others.

Again, notice the agent by whom this wondrous work of

redemption was accomplished. It was the Son of God. What a history has His been? It is the history of love personified. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Otherwise, it is implied, we could not live. We must have died under the sentence of sin. To arrest it, the Son of God became the substitute of the sinner. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." At what expense to God, was that gift conferred on men? We may judge what it must have been in the divine account when an inspired apostle uses this argument to enhance it—"he that spared not his own Son but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." If He gave that gift there is nothing which He will withhold. The highest gift that even Jehovah could have conferred has been bestowed; what then shall be withheld that is good and necessary for us? He gave His Son, He gave His only begotten Son, He gave His only begotten Son to become a man, to suffer, to die, to die the most cruel, cursed, and ignominious death. "Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The gift cannot be described, neither as a sacrifice on the part of God and His Son, nor as a boon to the sinful children of men. But, without dwelling upon that at present, let us observe the application which the apostle makes of this manifestation of divine love to the duty which we owe to one another. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The argument

is irresistible and overwhelming. It is clear, if we catch the inspiration of the dispensation under which we live, we must be filled with love one to another. God has exemplified it in the gift of His Son. His Son has exemplified it in the sacrifice of Himself. This has been done for the very creatures among whom we dwell. If God so acted by them, how are we to act? If Christ so suffered for them, what are we to endure? We must live and labour for one another.

Once more, notice the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and the part which He acts in this dispensation of love. He is indeed the Spirit of love. Every name that He bears is designed to instruct us in some service which He renders to the children of men. He is the Spirit of truth, having it for His office to make known to ignorant men the truth of God. He is the Spirit of light, opening the understanding to apprehend the truth which He has revealed. He is the Spirit of wisdom, discovering to men the path in which they may walk with safety and peace. He is the Spirit of power, strengthening to do what He commands, and avoid what He forbids. He is the Spirit of grace, subduing the will and sanctifying the depraved nature of man. He is the Spirit of supplications, inclining the hearts of men to call upon God, teaching them what to ask, and how to ask it. He is the Spirit of glory, putting honour upon those who yield themselves up to His guidance. It would seem, in short, as if He had taken notice of all the wants of sinners, and then assumed as many names as would be expressive of the supply to be found in Him of all these wants. Hence the actual participation of all the benefits of redemption is ascribed directly to Him. "Ye are washed, ye are justified, ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He washes the soul defiled by sin, cleansing it in the fountain of Christ's blood. He justifies the sinner, clothing him with the righteousness which Christ hath wrought out and brought

in. And He sanctifies him, purging the conscience from dead works, by the blood of Christ, to serve God. To accomplish these gracious services He comes down and dwells in the heart of sinners. He warns and entreats them to cultivate His presence. He exhorts them not to "quench the Spirit," or "grieve the Spirit." He promises to dwell in them and walk in them, and make them His chosen temple. Let any one say then what must be the result of His indwelling in the soul? He is compared to a seal, that leaves its impression behind it. By it "ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." As He is, therefore, so must they be. It is not they that act so much as it is the Spirit that acteth in them. His enlightened, enlarged, generous, and disinterested offices re-appear in them. What then must they be? What must they do? As the holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, so once made holy by Him, they too must abound in the genuine exercise of love.

Such is the work of redemption as it is seen in the person of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit. On the ground of it we put the question, "What manner of persons ought we to be," for whom that work is designed, and in whom it is accomplished? The apostle has well expressed it when he said, "Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered unto you." More literally the phrase is, "whereto ye were delivered." The reference is to fused metal cast into a mould and assuming its form. So when sinners receive the doctrine of redemption, they may be said to be cast into it as into a mould. They take its impression. They are conformed to it. They resemble the Father who originated it, the Son who executed it, and the Spirit who applies it. And therefore, by the very necessity of their new nature, they are engaged, not to "shut up their bowels of compassion, but to love in deed and in truth."

5. There is only one other work of God to which it is

necessary to refer in this illustration of love, but to complete the subject it cannot be overlooked. It is the relations in which it has pleased God to place men to one another in the present life. They are all such as require and afford opportunity for the constant exercise of good offices. The slightest reference to them will justify this remark.

The simplest, most intimate, and endeared, is the family. Here dwell together husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. Every one of these is bound to all the rest by the most sacred obligations. "Husbands, love your wives." "Wives, be obedient to your husbands." "Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." "Children obey your parents in all things." "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." "Servants, be obedient to your masters." No one can neglect a duty without involving the happiness of all the rest. They are dependent on one another. They are united in one circle of reciprocal love.

The family is an emblem again of the church. It is called the "family named after Christ." All its members are united to Him as the Head, and so to one another. They are compared to the human body, in the dependence of its members, and their sympathy with each other. "The foot cannot say to the head, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." The poor and the rich, the learned and the ignorant, the great and small, are united in one fellowship, for the very purpose of calling forth the many sympathies and kind offices which they require of one another. They are to "weep with those that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice."

And what is society itself but an extension of the family and the church? It will be the glory of the gospel to unite mankind as one great family. None are to be indifferent to any. All are to be concerned in every one. The privations

and afflictions of some are intended to awaken and exercise the love of others, while their kindness is designed to stir the gratitude of those who are relieved. All are bound together in one network of reciprocal claims and obligations, and their duties are well expressed in the comprehensive summary of the apostle, "Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king."

Let these illustrations suffice. Surely they are enough. Think of creation and its goodness, of providence and its bounties, of redemption with the grace of the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, of the relations of life with their nature and claims, and say what is duty? Is it not well described in the text—"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth."

LECTURE XXVII.

“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”—1 JOHN III. 19-22.

“**I**N keeping of God’s commandments there is a great reward.” This saying is universally true, and is verified in time as well as in eternity. In the passage before us it is applied to a particular duty, the exercise of brotherly love. It tells us of the happy results which follow from it. And it is observable that those which are named are all realized now, in the happy experience of the faithful and obedient disciple. The duty required is expressed in the words of the 18th verse, “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth.” Then the promise annexed to it is in the words of the text, “And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

There is a large amount of weighty sentiment here. We have 1. The description of believers, “We are of the truth.”

2. Their privilege, "We know that we are of the truth." 3. The happiness thence resulting, "And shall assure our hearts before him." 4. The evil avoided, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." 5. The contrary blessedness, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." 6. The exercise and enjoyment of that confidence, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him." And 7. The rule within which we may expect such enjoyment, "Because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight." Let us consider these simple but weighty sentiments.

1. The description of believers, "We are of the truth."

It is assumed that their peculiar character has been formed by means of the truth. What they are the truth has made them. None are such without it. And all who receive it are so constituted.

By the truth we are to understand that peculiar revelation of it which the apostle designates "the truth which is in Christ Jesus." It supposes that every subject is seen in the light of His Gospel. Such are the apprehensions of God, and man, and sin, and holiness and salvation, and time and eternity. All are seen as they are reflected in Christ, and in redemption by Him. And thus the character is formed to that peculiarity, by which it is distinguished from every other. It is then "of the truth." What is implied in being thus under the influence of the truth? A few words must suffice to explain it.

The truth is known. It has been revealed to the mind by the Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." As the sun

must rise and shine upon the earth before the objects that cover its surface can be seen, so the Spirit must shine on the truths of the Gospel before they can be apprehended. Then, but not till then, is the truth known.

When it is known it is loved. It is of such a nature that while it enlightens the understanding, it captivates the heart. It discovers Christ in such a way to the mind that He is embraced with gratitude and love. All who know Him, and the truth as it is in Him, exclaim with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It is not a cold assent that is given to the truth, but a warm embrace.

Finally, when the truth is thus known and loved, it is obeyed. In one place this is the account of its progress, "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Those who had been the most prejudiced against the truth, showed they had cordially embraced it by obeying it.

They, therefore, may be said to be "of the truth" who know it, love it, and obey it. In other words, they so believe it as to enter into its meaning, delight in its discoveries, and obey its requirements.

2. It is a privilege granted to believers to "know that they are of the truth."

From the explanation already given, it ought to be plain whence this knowledge arises. It may be traced to a single exercise, and that is our own consciousness. The apostle says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." It is a blessed appointment that on a question so momentous the believer has such a witness at hand. If he will only deal faithfully with himself, he need go no farther. All those exercises of which we have already spoken

are subjects of consciousness. Let us notice them in this view.

We may be conscious of knowing the truth. The conversion of the sinner is described by his being turned "from darkness to light." The mind is naturally dark, and whenever it is influenced by divine grace it is made to be "light in the Lord." This is a great change. It is one of which we may and ought to be conscious. There may be many things connected with this enlightenment which we cannot explain. We may not be able to trace the means or time of it, but of the fact itself we should see that we are sensible. We should be able to say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

In like manner we may be conscious of loving the truth. This was assumed by our Lord when He addressed His searching question, thrice repeated, to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" And Peter assumed the same when he replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." We never doubt the reality of this consciousness when the creature is the object of love. Why then should it be thought so mysterious when the Saviour, or the truth that is in Him, is the object?

Above all, we must be conscious whether or not we obey the truth. Do we allow ourselves to disregard its authority, or do we seek conscientiously to walk in conformity to it? To specify the duty enjoined by the apostle in the immediate context, do we love the brethren? And do we prove that love by doing them good? Surely these are inquiries within reach of our consciousness. If we wish to give an honest answer, it is clear we have only to observe our conduct, and return a faithful verdict. If we can have sympathy with the apostle when he said to his brethren, "Whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and

shall be with us for ever," surely we may be in a position to acquiesce in the sentiment which he has expressed in the text, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth." Happy are they who are enabled to do so, as shall now appear while we consider—

3. The happiness resulting thence, "and shall assure our hearts before him."

This, as might be expected, is a privilege often noticed with high commendation in the Scriptures. It is of it our Lord speaks when He says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," "If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." They would be set free from the thralldom of sin, and the fears which it inspired. They would be able to look up and walk in the light of the Lord's countenance. They would be delivered from the spirit of bondage that kept them from enjoying the liberty of freemen. Seeing the ground on which they could stand, in the light of the truth that revealed the Saviour of sinners, they could say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death."

It is the same subject that engages the attention of the Apostle Paul when he says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The believer can contemplate with satisfaction, the past, the present, and the future. As for the past, he knows and deeply feels his sin; but he is "justified by faith, and has peace with God." He plunges into the fountain of atoning blood, and all His sins are washed away. As to the present, "he stands in a state of grace." He is "accepted in the beloved." For His sake he has the divine favour. And he knows he is included in the sentence of approval, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And as for

the future, he is animated with a joyous hope. While his faith rests on what Christ has done, his hope waits for what He will do. And he knows he shall yet be a sharer in the glory of his God and Saviour.

It need only be added that the same apostle in another place represents this spirit of assurance to be among the blessings of redemption, saying, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." They are made to feel that as Christ is welcome to the Father, so are they. They appear in Him. And whatever he may look for, and on the same ground, so may they, for He said as He left them, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." O! how blessed to have our hearts thus assured before God.

4. The value of this privilege will be greatly enhanced, while we notice next the evil from which they who enjoy it are delivered, as this is expressed in the 20th verse, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things."

This is another appeal to our consciousness, and it speaks trumpet-tongued to both the sinner and the saint.

How does it speak to the sinner? It supposes the case of one who has no evidence of his interest in the truth. If he reflects at all he cannot but know he has never come with the burden of his sins, and cast it on the Saviour. He does not indeed profess that he has done so. He knows he is in sin, and admits it. Whatever his purpose may be one day to come to Jesus, he has not yet done so. His heart condemns him, as it accuses him of his sin and unbelief. Well, if this be his judgment of himself, how must God regard

him? If in his own blindness and hardness, he thus sees and owns his criminality, how must the infinitely wise and holy God account of him? He sees only a part, a little part, of his sin and danger. God sees them fully. Then how fearful the sentiment should be to him, "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

With like force it speaks to the saint. He is engaged in self-examination. He is supposed to be inquiring into the evidences of his acceptance with God. But alas! his doubts and fears are many. Nor are they without a cause. His unfaithfulness, and inconsistency, and unprofitableness, stare him in the face. He stands in doubt of himself. He sees cause to write bitter things against himself. It is well for him to do so. The time is critical. His danger is extreme. His peace, and holiness, and usefulness, are all at stake. Let him not heal slightly the wounds that have been inflicted on his conscience. Let him see he does indeed wash afresh in the open fountain of Christ's blood. Let him be encouraged by this promise, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But let him be warned also by this consideration, that "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

5. To stimulate both saint and sinner to seek to have their hearts assured before God, consider the blessedness contrasted with this evil, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

It is taken for granted such a case there may be. But it is important to understand distinctly how it may be attained. It certainly does not suppose that any believer will think or say he is free from sin. There are three things which enter into his case. He came at first as a poor lost sinner to the gracious Saviour, and found salvation in Him. Often defiled

again by sin, he has returned to the same fountain and washed afresh. He has heard the Saviour saying to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." And now deeply sensible of the Saviour's love and claims, as well as of the vileness and danger of sin, it is his firm purpose to go and sin no more. He is conscious that such have been and are now his exercises, and it is in this consciousness he is enabled to adopt the language before us and say, "If our heart condemn us not then have we confidence toward God."

This is not a mere theory. We have seen it realized. Paul acted on it when he said, "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." He could meet conscience and speak with it. Under its sanction he could appeal that simplicity of aim and sincerity of purpose governed his conduct. Not that he took any credit to himself for all this. He owned that his deportment had not arisen from "fleshly wisdom." It was no prudence nor power of his own that did it. It was "the grace of God." By it he had maintained a consistent conversation, and he owned it to the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

It is the same still with the consistent believer, and he reaps a rich reward. "He has confidence toward God." He has confidence in the evidence He has given him that he is "of the truth." He has confidence in the enjoyment of His favour. He has confidence in the continuance of His grace. He has confidence in the providence He will exercise toward him. He has confidence in the fulfilment of all His promises. He has confidence in the final enjoyment of everlasting life. He has confidence in all God is, and has said, and will do—"confidence toward God."

6. In the text this confidence is confined to one exercise,

and we shall limit our attention to it—"And whatsoever we ask we receive of him." It is the confidence which the believer has in prayer.

It is no wonder he should be confident, when he considers the ground on which he approaches God, and prefers his petitions. He comes simply as a believer in the Lord Jesus. He puts his supplications into His censer, and looks for their acceptance in the perfume of His incense. The words of the apostle are his words—"Seeing then that we have a great High priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Or those other words of the same great apostle—"Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Here truly are grounds of confidence in prayer. How appropriately may it be said in view of them, "Whatsoever ye shall ask, believing, ye shall receive." We cannot ask too much. We cannot ask too confidently. We ask only what God has promised. We ask that only on the grounds which He has himself prescribed. We may therefore say, "We have confidence toward God, that whatsoever we shall ask we receive of him."

7. Let us, however, not overlook the rule within which we are taught to expect an answer to our prayer—"Because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

It need scarcely be said we do not understand this "because," of any merit in our conduct, on account of which our prayers are heard. That were totally inconsistent with all the Scriptures, and with the views which have already been advanced. It is, however, to be interpreted of the actual conduct of every man who is entitled to expect a gracious answer to his prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ. Every one who really trusts in Christ seeks to serve Him. And every one who has confidence in Him towards God, when he prays in His name, "keeps his commandments, and does those things that are pleasing in his sight." It is only to such the promises are made.

Observe how strongly this subject is put in the divine word. On the one hand, the case of those who observe the form of prayer, but act inconsistently, is thus put; "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." On the other hand, of those whose faith is sustained by a corresponding deportment, it is said—"The Lord is far from the wicked, but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

How just these sentiments! How reasonable! They approve themselves to all. And they exactly harmonize with the words before us—"Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight"

In conclusion, we learn from this whole subject the inseparable connexion between active godliness and spiritual enjoyment. If we would know we are of the truth, and assure our hearts before God, and have confidence in Him, and delight in prayer, we must be consistent and holy. Especially we must be useful. We must abound in brotherly love. And

we cannot close better than in the words of Isaiah lviii. 6-12. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer, thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

LECTURE XXVIII.

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.”—1 JOHN iii. 23, 24.

THESE verses are most appropriately appended to the precious promise contained in that which precedes them. The apostle had said, “whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.” Those who would desire to have such a promise fulfilled to them, could scarcely restrain themselves from asking, and what are his commandments, on obedience to which so high a privilege is suspended? The apostle anticipates the inquiry and says, “this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment,” adding as encouragement to obedience, “and he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

This is the connection in which these words are introduced to our notice, and it serves to commend them to our special attention, while their own deep significance justly entitles them to it. In considering them we shall follow their own

order, taking up separately the several clauses contained in them. May the divine Spirit enable us to understand, obey, and enjoy them.

1. First, then, "this is the commandment of God, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

Faith in Christ is usually described as an unspeakable privilege, and such it assuredly is. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but might have everlasting life." What an indescribable blessedness to enjoy by such simple means. Only believe and thou shalt be saved from all evil, and possessed of the highest present and eternal good. Sometimes faith is represented to be a duty. If God has made the offer of His Son to us, and eternal life in Him, we are bound gratefully to accept it. It is highly criminal if we reject it, especially when we consider the giver, the gift, and the full evidence of its divine origin by which it is accompanied. Hence it is asked, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" In the text faith is commanded. It is required of us by God. And there are important reflections suggested by its being presented to us in this light. "This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

It is intended for warning. We are reminded that we cannot refuse or neglect to believe, without placing ourselves in opposition to the authority of God. It has not been left optional with us, whether or not we shall receive Christ into the arms of our faith. God has commanded us to do it. If we refuse He holds us guilty of rebellion against Him. Hence our Lord plainly teaches, "he that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The rejection of Him is traced to the worst condition of mind—"this is the condemnation, that

light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." The resistance to the divine command is ascribed to the love and power of sin, and shall be treated accordingly.

At the same time this form is adopted for the sake of encouragement as well as warning. It meets the scrupulous fear of many an humble, anxious soul. There are those who have been made sensible of their sin, and confess their need of a Saviour. They have been so far enlightened to know Him, as to see and own His entire sufficiency. They will admit, too, that His salvation is at once full and free. But there is a hindrance in the way. It is their own unworthiness. They write bitter things against themselves, and feel they are utterly unworthy to be partakers of redemption. They are too vile for so high a favour, and much as they need it and desire it, they cannot hope to enjoy it. Now God speaks to all such as well as others, and commands them to believe. He does not permit them, even on this ground of professed humiliation, to reject His Son. He knows their vileness far better than they do, and condemns it far more, yet He does not leave them at liberty to remain in unbelief. He reminds them of what is written, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." But with all His knowledge of the extent of our iniquity, He will hear of no reason for declining to embrace His Son. All, therefore, should feel themselves shut up to the necessity of an immediate compliance with His will. We should be thankful He has declared it so distinctly, and that it is written, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ."

Much, however, as there is for both warning and encouragement in the form of the requirement, it is the requirement itself that is specially worthy of consideration and compliance. It is to believe in Jesus. But that duty is here ex-

pressed in a way that at once clearly illustrates and powerfully enforces it. It is to believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ. The name of Christ is expressive of His whole character. It denotes what He is in Himself, and what is the nature of the mission on which He has come. To believe on His name is to embrace Him in all the relations in which He is made known to us. He is our prophet, and we are to believe in His instructions, yielding ourselves up to them implicitly and unreservedly. He is our priest, and we are to believe in His work, casting ourselves upon it as our only but all-sufficient hope, assured that by "one sacrifice he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He is our King, and we should believe in His supremacy, that He is head over all things to the church, that all power has been given to Him in heaven and in earth, and particularly that God "hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him." He is our Advocate, and we should believe in his intercession, putting our cause into His hands, and waiting for the acceptance of our prayers, knowing they are perfumed with the incense of His sacrifice. He is our Shepherd, and we should believe in His care, following Him wherever He is pleased to lead us. He is our elder brother, and we should believe in His sympathy, knowing we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In a word, we should search the Scriptures, and find every name that is given to Him there, that we may consider it and meet it with corresponding exercises. Not one is given to Him in vain. It is intended to meet some infirmity in His people, to correct some error, or dispel some fear, or comfort under some sorrow, or guide in some perplexity, or warn against some danger, or stimulate to some duty, or strengthen against some temptation. It is when we thus act we comply

with the commandment of God, "To believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

2. With this commandment another is associated, "And love one another, as he gave us commandment." Let it then be next considered.

It is not without design that these two commandments are classed together. Nor is it to be overlooked how the apostle was led to mention them together. He had been dwelling largely and insisting strenuously on the subject of brotherly love. He had shown its nature, and claims, and duties. It is in this connexion he says, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment." It is as if he had said, I do not expect to see brotherly love unless there be first faith in Jesus Christ. But if there be faith in Christ, brotherly love must follow as its necessary fruit. There are thus in the connexion of these commandments two great truths presented to us, which it may be profitable to notice, that where there is not faith in Christ, there can be no brotherly love, and that wherever faith is there must be brotherly love. Consider these apart.

Without faith there is not brotherly love. It is not meant that it ought not or could not be without it. Even independent of the Gospel of Christ, men should love one another. They are the children of one Father. God made them alike, and preserves them. They are one family. They are bound, therefore, by the very law of their creation, to live in mutual love and sympathy. But they do not. It is a great fact that wherever the Gospel has been unknown, men have been found "hateful and hating one another." There are some instincts of affection left, which were necessary for the preservation of the species. The parent has a regard for his child. There is clanship and combination for the common protection. But the duty of love to all has never been recog-

nized without the light of revelation. Wars prevail in all heathen communities. The law of extirpation is that which reigns among them. Even where the light of revelation shines and the Gospel of Christ exercises its influence over a community, it will be found that the mere publication of the one or the possession of the other, does not secure brotherly love. There is still required the reception of the truth into the individual mind. The Spirit of God must enlighten the mind to understand the Gospel, and touch the heart by its sacred influence, in order to form it to the habit of brotherly love. It is true there is a measure of influence which the Gospel may exercise over even unconverted men. There may be much kindness and sympathy created. But that love which embraces all, while it cherishes with peculiar tenderness the people of God, will not be found in the human heart, save as the fruit of the Spirit. He who knew what was in man required that we should believe on His Son in order that we might love one another.

On the other hand, the opposite sentiment is equally true, that wherever faith is there also must brotherly love be. This is assumed in the text when it is said, "Love one another, as he gave us commandment." It is Christ that is meant. It was known to all that a favourite subject with Him was the love of the brethren. He said, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." If, then, we receive Him by faith, what must the result be? Faith receives Him as the only Saviour and Master. It bows to His authority, and acknowledges the obligation of His commandments. If, therefore, He is Himself received, so must be His instructions. Of these one is, that all His people shall love one another. Hence the inseparable connexion between the two commandments in the text, "Believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

Not only, however, is brotherly love felt to be a duty, and to be required from all who profess subjection to the authority of Christ. It is freely rendered as a spontaneous exercise, and arises out of the very condition and habit of mind produced by faith. Nothing could be stronger than the language of the Apostle Paul on this subject. "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Only reflect on these terms, and the views which they give us of the unity of believers, and it must be seen how of necessity brotherly love springs out of their common connexion with the common Saviour. "One body," of which the members have a sympathy with one another as real and natural as those of our mortal frame. "One Spirit"—all moved, as if one soul animated the entire body, and governed every member. "One hope"—all looking forward to one heaven where they desire to dwell together for ever. "One Lord"—all owning one master, and refusing subjection to any other. "One faith"—all entertaining the same views of truth, and cherishing the same feelings towards it. "One baptism"—all alike baptised by the Holy Ghost, so as to have their character formed and influenced by Him. "One God and Father of all"—all members of the same family, in which Christ is the elder brother. This Father, "above all, and through all, and in them all." "Above" them, in the exercise of His sovereign pleasure, to which they cheerfully submit. "Through" them, in the pervading influence which He exercises over them, individually and unitedly. "In" them, dwelling within the soul as His chosen temple, where He exerts His gracious power in subduing and sanctifying them for Himself. Now, say, what must be the influence of such a union as this in producing brotherly love? Can there be faith without brotherly love? It is manifestly

impossible. As faith unites all believers to Christ, so does it unite them to one another. In the very measure in which they love Him they are constrained to love one another. And hence the two requirements are associated in the text, "this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment."

3. These commandments shall not be obeyed in vain. Blessed consequences are ascribed to them in the text, which we shall now proceed to consider. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Two results are mentioned, the indwelling of God in the soul, and the knowledge of that indwelling. We shall consider these separately.

There is first, the indwelling of God with the believer. It is expressed very strongly, "He in them, and they in him." Fellowship with the Father arises out of fellowship with the Son, and with His people. Hence the deep language of Christ in His intercessory prayer, "I pray for them which shall believe on me, that they all may be one as Thou Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Hence, also, the language of John, who always spoke so like his master. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." It is not difficult to see how this fellowship with the Father arises out of that which is maintained with the Son and His people. In both we meet with God. God was in Christ. Christ was the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Whenever we come to Christ, therefore, we come to God, and as we dwell in Him, so God dwelleth in us. So also with the people of Christ. In them we behold the work and the image of God. Paul says of the Galatians, "they glorified God in me." While we see the enlightenment, and purity, and zeal, and patience, and

all the other graces that adorn the believer, we see God their author in them. We are made to feel that in communion with them we converse with Him. If through nature we look up to nature's God, how much more are we led to Him while we praise and glorify Him for His work in His believing people. It is not too much to say, then when we keep the commandments of faith in Christ, and love to the brethren, "God dwelleth in us, and we in him."

But how shall we describe a blessing such as this! God dwelleth in us. Then what a provision to meet all our necessities. Thus truly are we enlightened to know what is right. Thus also is there produced in us a disposition to do it. In the same way we are enabled to carry our purposes and desires into execution. It is thus only we can be kept amid the temptations and trials of life. But if God dwell in us, we are "strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man,"—and are made "conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

This, however, is not all. Not only have they who keep the commandments of faith and love a promise of the indwelling of God, but an assurance, as we may now notice in the second place, of that gracious indwelling. "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." The fact is asserted, and the way of it is explained.

"We know that he abideth in us." We may know, and we ought to know it. Surely it should not be accounted an incredible thing if they who are enlightened to know the will of God, who are disposed to do it, enabled to practise it, and find their happiness in it, should know that such favours have been conferred upon them. Rather might it not be expected the greatness of such a change would make it apparent wherever it had really taken place? If in any case doubts were entertained of its reality, might it not be feared

that either it had not been effected, or that something had arisen to obscure it? Assuredly no believer should be satisfied to remain either ignorant or doubtful of it. He should earnestly wait upon God, and be watchful of himself, until he is enabled to say, "We know that he abideth in us."

The way in which he may attain to such knowledge is here declared—"By the Spirit which he hath given us." The Holy Spirit is meant, and there are two ways in which He manifests the indwelling of God. The one is by direct communication to the soul, and the other by the effects of His operation. It is a part of the Spirit's work to assure the heart of the believer. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." He will make it plain to all who really desire it and ask Him. The other is, however, more sure and satisfying. He produces effects which can be ascribed to Him only. He is compared to a seal. "By whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." A seal leaves its own image behind it. So does the Spirit. He is the Spirit of light, and wherever He dwells there is illumination. He is the Holy Spirit, and wherever He abides there is holiness. He is the Spirit of peace, and patience, and love, and goodness, and wherever He has taken up His abode there these and all similar graces must be found. Thus we may say, "we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us,"—the Spirit of faith and love.

Mark the term, "abideth in us." True religion is as enduring as its Author. It is written, "the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. x. 38.

LECTURE XXIX.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God : and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come ; and even now already is it in the world.”—1 JOHN iv. 1-3.

✓ THERE are two titles by which the author of this epistle designates those whom he addresses in it, sometimes using the one, and again the other. These are “little children,” and “beloved.” They are both expressive of the most tender endearment, and highly characteristic of the venerable and loving man by whom they are employed. But there is another thought connected with them, which it is especially appropriate to notice at present, considering the subject on which we are entering. The two titles that have been named are obviously designed to comprehend all the members of the church. They are not addressed to any one class exclusively. The duties required of them are demanded of all. And it is of importance this should be noticed and remembered. The duty in question is one which has been supposed by many to be binding only on the ministers of the church. They have not felt that it laid any obligation on themselves. But the apostle thought differently. He speaks to the members,

to all the members, of the church. And bearing this in mind, let us proceed to consider the counsel which he is inspired to address to them.

In the first verse he expresses it generally, and in the two following more particularly. We shall endeavour to unfold it under these two aspects.

I. The general counsel is in these words, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

The first question that naturally arises on this counsel is, Who are meant by "the spirits" of whom the apostle speaks? Nor have we far to go in order to find a satisfactory answer. It is furnished in the verse itself. Those who are called "spirits" in the first part of it, are denominated "prophets" in the last. They are identified as constituting one and the same class. They are the ministers of the word, whether those who write or preach it, all who professed or were acknowledged to be the instructors of the church.

This view of the subject gives rise, however, to another question, Why are the prophets or ministers of the word denominated spirits? No doubt a reason may be that they are to the church somewhat as the spirit is to the body. They animate, guide, and control it. But the grand reason appears to be the influence by which they are actuated. They are supposed to be under the dominion of other spirits. These may be good, or they may be evil. They may be according to the mind of the Spirit of truth, or the spirit of error. They may be the servants either of the Spirit of God, or of Satan. They may be instruments to advance the cause of holiness, or it may be of sin. They are either the best friends or the worst enemies of the church and its religion. Their influence is mighty for good or for evil.

Such being the position of the teachers of the Church, we

must at once perceive the propriety of the counsel which is given respecting them. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God." Every part of this counsel is most suggestive. "Believe not every spirit." You are not to suppose because a man is a minister he must be sound in his views, or faithful in his office, or exemplary in his life. He might be a prophet, yet wanting in all these attainments. Witness Balaam. Or an apostle, witness Judas. Or an ordinary pastor or teacher. Witness multitudes in all ages who have inherited the spirit, and imitated the conduct of these unfaithful ministers. It must never, therefore, be taken for granted that the mere office confers any sanctity or furnishes a security for the truth and righteousness of those who are invested with it. Instead of any such assumption a duty is required toward all such in the most positive terms. The command is, "Try the spirits, whether they are of God." All professing ministers must be tested by the members of the church. Among the peculiar endowments of the early Church we find there is mentioned the "discerning of spirits." Peter exemplified it when at once he detected Simon Magus, and, although he had just been baptized, addressed him in those awful words, "Repent of thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." But neither did this duty belong only to apostles, nor was it exercised only by them. In full harmony with the view which we have given of its obligation upon all the members of the church, it is recorded of the Bereans, "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." They sat in judgment on the teachings of the apostles themselves. And they are commended for having done so. Not only was it their privilege or duty, but it is recorded to their

honour. But mark how they discharged the duty. They brought what was laid before them in the spoken discourse to the test of the written word. They did not judge by their own views, or feelings, or prejudices, or partialities, but by the recorded testimony of God. If what they heard was in accordance with that, they were bound to receive it and submit to it; if it was inconsistent with it, they were equally bound to reject it and refuse the ministry that taught it. This is recorded of them as an example to us. And it serves both to enjoin the duty and instruct us how to discharge it, when we are commanded to "try the spirits." Nor let us fail particularly to notice what is to be tried in the matter of all ministers of the Word. It is "whether they are of God." How solemn the duty! Has God sent them? Do they bear their credentials from Him? Do they speak His truth? Do they maintain His cause? Do they promote His glory? These responsible duties God has laid upon the members of His Church. It is not optional with them whether they will perform them or neglect them. One great security for the maintenance of the truth is in their hands. If they act with fidelity, they honour a sacred trust and serve a righteous cause; but if they wink at error or sin, they betray the great Head of the Church, and His cause and truth into the hands of the enemy. They are held bound to "try the spirits whether they are of God."

A reason is assigned for this duty, which yet remains to be noticed, "Because many false prophets are gone out into the world." It was so even in the days of the apostles. All their influence, and zeal, and fidelity could not prevent it. The opponents of the truth were many—many in numbers, many in their forms of error, and many in the spirit and practices of enmity which they discovered. It is, therefore, no strange thing that happens if the same be found in all subsequent ages and in our own. Alas! what has been the

history of the Church but a series of contests with its enemies. As we turn over the pages of the past or open our eyes on the objects that present themselves to our observation, what do we behold? Here is one class "holding the truth in unrighteousness." They adhere with tenacity to the letter of an orthodox creed, but they want its spirit. There is another, repudiating the great truths of the Gospel, and substituting for them the deductions of their own perverted understanding. And yet a third are little if at all less dangerous. In them Satan assumes the form of an angel of light. They make high pretensions to superior enlightenment, extraordinary zeal, and unusual activity. They are captivated by some one truth, and they urge it to the exclusion of every other. Or they conceive of it under some new aspect, and they are borne away with it as if an immediate revelation had been made to them, which they were commissioned to bear to the children of men. It is by such men the great enemy has commonly introduced dangerous errors and practices to the Church. The plea is that they are godly men, and that surely such would not encourage either error or sin. They would not do so knowingly. But alas! they have often done so unwittingly. They are the very persons whom Satan is most anxious to employ. Those who are generally regarded as erroneous in doctrine or ungodly in life, would not serve his purpose. It is under the garb of piety he seeks to introduce the injurious element. Once introduced, he knows it will operate as the leaven, influencing all with which it is brought into contact, until it leavens the whole lump. It was with such views as these before him the apostle warned the church by the assurance that "many false prophets were gone out into the world."

Nor let us overlook the powerful motive by which the members of the church are urged to fidelity in the duty here required of them. Compassion for false teachers should

operate on them. Their guilt is great and we should earnestly seek to deliver them from it. What is the crime of the man who sets up a false light on the dangerous shore? Such is that of the false teacher. But it is not he only that is concerned. Our Lord has said, "if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch." This was seen in the Pharisees and Jews. The Pharisees taught false doctrine and the nation perished. In like manner they who mislead the members of the church draw them with themselves to destruction. Above all, if we encourage false teachers we are held accountable with them and shall be partakers in their condemnation. John says, "if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." He who encourages a false teacher is held responsible for his evil influence. Surely in such circumstances the counsel of the apostle is seasonable—"beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

II. Having given this general counsel the apostle proceeds to give a particular illustration of both the error that might be introduced and of the duty of opposing it in the subsequent verses. His words are, "hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

These are pointed words. Let us mark them and try to gather the great lesson conveyed by them. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God." There are signs by which the minister who is under the teaching and influence of the Spirit of God

may be known. What are they? They are both positive and negative. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." He who receives this great truth "with the spirit and the understanding," and professes it before men, gives evidence that he is taught and led by the divine Spirit. On the other hand, "he who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." The man who either does not apprehend this truth or is not constrained to profess it, shows he is not under the teaching or power of the Spirit. "And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." From the first it had been foreseen and foretold that such rejection of the truth would be found in the church, and even while the apostle lived, it had begun to make its appearance.

We are naturally led to inquire what is the special error to which the apostle refers? It has been said that before he died a class of persons had arisen who denied the reality of both the person and work of Christ. They held that He merely seemed to be and suffer, as men judged respecting Him. And to these, it is alleged, the apostle alluded in this passage. No doubt there were such persons in the early church. But we cannot suppose his words had no higher meaning or purpose than to refute their imagination. He could not attach so much importance to the mere confession that Christ did really live and die, as is attributed to the sentiment of the text. It must have a far higher meaning. It is one of those cardinal truths which at first sight seems to be extremely simple, but which, as it is reflected upon, grows in importance and comprehensiveness, and at length is seen to contain the fundamental principles of the Gospel of Christ. Let us endeavour to illustrate this remark.

1. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is to own the divinity of His mission. Observe the exercise of an early disciple when he did so. Christ claimed to be the

promised Messiah. The inquirer examined the predictions of the Old Testament, and compared them with the features of Christ's ministry. He was satisfied they were in harmony with one another. He came to the conclusion that the Christ of the New Testament was the Messiah of the Old. He received Him in faith as the Promised One. He acknowledged that His mission was divine. This, it must be felt, was a commendable exercise.

2. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is to own the divinity of His person. He came in the flesh, but it was admitted He existed before. He appeared as the Son of man, but he was owned to be the Son of God. All the sublime descriptions of the ancient Scriptures were therefore recognised in Him. He was accounted the Lord of David as well as his Son. Look at the congratulations by which He was met by those who waited for Him. Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Zecharias exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David." He was hailed as a divine person, who had come upon a divine mission.

3. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is to own the grace of both His mission and His person. It is to acquiesce in the high testimony of an apostle, "though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." His deep humiliation was estimated by the glory from which he had descended. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

4. Finally, to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is to own Him to be an all-sufficient Saviour. This is

the very essence of the confession. It is to see that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. It is to acquiesce in the angelic announcement, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Admitting this now to be a fair interpretation of the confession before us, it cannot surprise us to find that the apostle makes it the mark of an enlightened and faithful ministry. It is not the only one we should require, but it is fundamental and essential. The true minister feels the power of this truth himself, and so he is qualified to go forth and proclaim it to others. He has felt that he is himself a poor perishing sinner, but he has fled to Christ and found refuge in him. He can say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Having himself tasted that the Lord is gracious he calls upon others saying, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." As of old he can still say, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." A full and earnest publication of the Gospel is thus a natural and essential sign of an enlightened ministry. And this is just the principle on which the apostle writes, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

In conclusion, let us learn that we may judge of our own state by the manner in which we judge of the ministry of the word, and act towards it. Do we apprehend, and approve, and enjoy, and encourage a full, and plain, and faithful publication of the Gospel, of Christ and Him crucified, of Christ

the power of God, and the wisdom of God? Or is the subject dark to our apprehension, and contrary to our taste, and repugnant to our feelings? If the former, then there is reason to think we are of God. If the latter, then there is reason to fear we are not of God. The man who is in health relishes and requires plain and wholesome food; but the man who nauseates it, shows that he is labouring under disease. It is the same with the mind. An enlightened hearer of the word must have the bread of life broken to him, and no other food will satisfy his soul. By it he feels that he is nourished unto everlasting life. John x. 2-5.

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.
It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
’Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.”

LECTURE XXX.

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them ; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world : therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us : he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”—1 JOHN iv. 4-6.

THE subject of the former discourse was, the evidence of an enlightened and faithful ministry of the word. It may be known specially by the full and clear testimony which it bears to the completeness and sufficiency of Christ as the Saviour of sinners. “Hereby know ye the spirit of God ; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.” And it is laid as a solemn duty and obligation on all who hear the word, to see to it that its ministry is maintained with soundness and faithfulness. v. 1.

Another subject, kindred to the former, now solicits our attention. It is the duty of those who hear the word to try themselves, as well as those who minister unto them. This is introduced with great propriety in immediate connexion with the former subject. There is danger, lest in looking after others we should forget ourselves. Besides, it is only when we are ourselves right, we are in a capacity to judge of others. An unprofitable hearer can never be a fit judge of a faithful minister. Let us therefore hear the

counsel of the apostle to the hearer of the word, annexed to that which he had given him regarding its minister.

This counsel is given in the form of a contrast between profitable and unprofitable hearers. It is given too with great variety and fulness. There are no less than three distinct and pointed contrasts in the verses that are before us. We shall take them up severally in their order, praying God to give us to perceive on which side of the contrast we are to be found.

1. The first contrast is in the 4th verse. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Every clause is full of matter, and deserves careful consideration.

"Ye are of God." Their connexion with Him was their grand characteristic. It cannot mean either that of creation or providence, for such belonged to all men as well as to them. It was gracious. They had been specially *taught* by Him. His Spirit had enlightened them in the knowledge of the truth. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This spiritual discernment had been imparted to them. Thus taught of God they were *led* by him. His word was most precious to them. It was as the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night to Israel. They would not move but by its guidance. Wherever it led they followed. Their spirit is fittingly expressed by David when he says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." At the same time they were divinely influenced, and *enabled* by God to walk by it. They could say, His "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Thus taught, led, and upheld, it might well be said of them, "Ye are of God."

"Little children." This is their designation. And it is

the usual one throughout the Epistle. They had been *born* of God. A change had passed upon them such as is described when it is said, "As many as received them, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." As the children of God they were *conformed* to His image. They were renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the moral likeness of Him that created them anew in Christ. As little children, they were *docile* and simple-minded, only asking on every question what saith the Lord?

"Ye have overcome them." Nothing could be more natural than the connexion between this victory and the spirit of children. It is a victory over false teachers and seducers that is meant. And when are we best prepared to gain it? Most assuredly when the spirit is right toward God. It is well and necessary that we have accurate and extensive knowledge. It is good when we are endowed with strong capacity and the talent of self defence. But it is better far to have the heart right. So long as it is so, error finds no door of entrance to the mind. As the eye is protected against every intrusion by the defence which God has placed around it, so the heart that cherishes the spirit of a child towards God, instinctively resists the assault of error. To such a one the truth carries its own self-evidencing light, and so does error. Never is the believer so safe, not when clothed with all the panoply of argument, as when his soul is filled with the love of God. Argument is not refused by him. He is able and ready to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in him." But love will give a power to argument which otherwise it could not command. And there is true philosophy as well as religion in the apostle's congratulation, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them."

This view is mightily confirmed by what is added, "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." The reference is manifestly to the Spirit of God and the spirit of the wicked one. The former dwelt in the children of God and the latter in the false teachers as in all the world. Paul says to the Ephesians, describing what they had been before they had known the truth, "ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Between this evil spirit and the Holy Spirit there is a perpetual conflict in the mind of the believer. The one would insinuate error, while the other maintains the truth. The one would weaken the influence of the truth by diluting it with human speculation, the other would uphold its power by preserving the soul in "the simplicity of Christ." It is to this gracious and sustained influence of the Spirit the believer is indebted for his victory over all the temptations that are presented to beguile him from the true gospel. As this is his strength he should diligently cultivate it. While he trusts it he need not fear, knowing the superiority of the good spirit over the evil. But if ever he forgets his dependence he is overthrown. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And this is in full harmony with the sentiment before us—"ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

2. The second contrast is in the 5th and 6th verses, "they are of the world ; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God ; he that is of God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Is it not humbling to find "the world" so spoken of by an inspired apostle? The term is used as if it were expressive

of evil. The reason obviously is the universal character of mankind. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world, and the world passeth away and the fashion of it." It is for the same reason our Lord represents His church and the world as two distinct and opposing communities. "I pray for them, I pray not for the world—they are not of the world even as I am not of the world—the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." The world is contrary to Christ. And Christ is contrary to the world. It is on this assumption the description before us is founded. And this will be more manifest as we notice the particulars.

"They are of the world." The reference is no doubt specially to false teachers. Like other men, it might be said of them, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." They were born in sin, and inherited the principles of fallen and corrupt humanity. To this heritage there was, in their case, no exception. So constituted they formed the habits natural and congenial to worldly men. Their tastes and dispositions lay all in that direction. They were "carnally minded" and not "spiritually minded." They looked upon the things of eternity only in the light of time, instead of looking at the things of time in the light of eternity. They might therefore be as those ancient prophets who said, "put me into the priest's office, that I may eat a piece of bread." They looked upon the ministry merely as a stepping-stone to certain worldly advantages and enjoyments, instead of regarding it as a high commission to promote the spiritual interests of themselves and others. It is noticeable that they continued to exhibit such a character notwithstanding any training they may have enjoyed for the ministry of the word. They may have been early devoted to it by godly parents. They may have been educated carefully with a view to it. They may have been approved by those who were called on to judge of their gifts

and capacity for it. They may have been solemnly ordained to its sacred duties. But all these preparations had not changed their natural propensities. They may have restrained and modified them, but they continued the same men. Their hearts were never really given to God. They were still as they had been at the first. And amid all their attainments and professions it might be said of them, "they are of the world."

One particular proof of this worldly spirit is cited in the text, "therefore speak they of the world," and it deserves special attention. It may be understood either of their public ministrations or their private conversation. Both were marked by a tone of worldliness. In their interpretation of the divine word they gave expression to views that savoured more of this life than of that which was to come. It is said of the late Robert Hall that in speaking of the learned and laborious comment of Macknight on the Epistles of the New Testament, he remarked, "this author never sets his foot in heaven so long as he can keep it on the earth." His criticisms and expositions were cast in an earthly mould. How many public discourses breathe the same spirit. They are "of the earth earthy." Their arguments are drawn from time more than from eternity. It is impossible to hearken to them and not to feel we are in an atmosphere of earthliness. But if this be true of the public services of such men, far more does it apply to their private conversation. At times they may speak eloquently and impressively of the soul and salvation and eternity. Their discourses may be weighty and powerful, and exercise a mighty influence upon those who hear them. But follow them from the pulpit to the parlour. What a change! The high tone of sacredness is let down to the lowest earthliness. It is there they unbosom themselves and give vent to the feelings that really govern them. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." There

is no more sure index of a man's real character than his unrestrained and ordinary conversation. If it be habitually worldly he is worldly. Particularly is this true of the ministers of the word. Their very profession might be expected to elevate them to higher themes. If it fail to do so their earthly tendencies must be peculiarly strong. And hence this is the characteristic on which the apostle has fixed our attention—"they are of the world, therefore speak they of the world."

It is added, "and the world heareth him." It might have been supposed that even the world would detect the inconsistency between the sacred profession of a minister of the word, and a worldly conversation. But it is not so. His earthly services are understood and relished. His views and reasonings are acceptable and popular. They do not alarm or displease. "They prophesy smooth things," and the "people love to have it so." Or if there be fault found with their public services, as is sometimes done, it is far otherwise with their private deportment. Even the world may have some perception of the propriety of public faithfulness, but it will not find fault with a worldly companionship. Alas! how often has the minister of the sanctuary been used as the 'gay and entertaining attendant on circles of folly and amusement. His example has quieted the conscience of some who might otherwise have been ill at ease. His presence has been made the justification of practices that might otherwise have been considered doubtful. Only let him grace betimes the commencement of a revelry, and it is enough. He withdraws when he knows his farther connivance would be felt to be unseasonable, but the outrage on propriety continues, and his temporary presence is pleaded as an excuse. So true is the apostle's description—"They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

To all this the contrast is expressed in the beginning of the 6th verse—"We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us." As before we shall pursue the particulars of the description.

"We are of God." In every sense this is true of the faithful minister. He is *born* of God, as a subject of His grace, for as "the husbandman must first be partaker of the fruits," so the minister of Christ must experience the blessedness of religion himself before he can recommend it to others. He is *called* of God to his high office. "No man taketh this honour to himself, save he that is called, as was Aaron." The Spirit first qualifies, and then calls the ambassador of Christ to his work. He is *sustained* and furthered in it by God. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." What an accumulation of illustration! And it is all designed to impress the one thought, that ministers are no less and no more than instruments in the hand of God for the conversion, and edification, and salvation of sinners. Thus, in the highest and best sense, they may all say with the apostle, "We are of God."

It is this circumstance that determines their reception among men. By one class they are cordially welcomed, while by another they are rejected. "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." It is only natural that as men are affected toward God, so should they be toward His ministers. They who know God as their Father and friend will rejoice in His messengers. They understand them, and approve their sayings. They say, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." They can enter into the strains of David and say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles,

O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." A delight in ordinances has ever been a marked feature in the godly. On the other hand, they are not relished by the ungodly. They may partially wait upon them, but their heart is not in them. They may be addressed as Christ said to those who heard Him—"Ye are from beneath, I am from above ; ye are of this world, I am not of this world—why do ye not understand my speech ? even because ye cannot hear my word—he that is of God heareth God's words ; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." How like unto these words are those of the apostle, "We are of God ; he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us."

3. The third contrast yet remains to be noticed. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

There is a Spirit of truth, and there is a spirit of error. The one is the Holy Spirit of God, and the other is the spirit of the wicked one. The one accomplishes his mission by means of the truth, and the other serves his ends by means of deception and falsehood. They divide mankind between them. The one dwells in the heart of the believer, the other in that of the unbeliever. And it may be known which is the spirit to which any one is subject.

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of truth." Wherever He dwells He introduces His own *light*. He shines in the understanding, "giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Where He enlightens, He *quickens*. As the sun both shines and warms with his beams, so doth the Divine Spirit. Under His influence the powers of the soul are endowed with spiritual life. As He enlightens and quickens, He *fructifies*. Wherever He dwells Himself His fruit abounds, being "in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." It is surely, then, not too much to say, "hereby know ye the Spirit of truth."

In like manner, "Hereby know ye the spirit of error." Where he dwells there is *darkness*. The mind cannot apprehend the truth of the divine word. Where he is there is *delusion*. His dupe puts "bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Where he is, there is *sin*. The passions are not subdued. The actions are not holy. There is confusion, and every evil work. "Hereby know we the spirit of error."

This knowledge may be possessed with regard either to ourselves or others. We may know ourselves, what spirit we are of, by a faithful self-examination. We may know others by an impartial observation of their spirit and conduct. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

It is especially a solemn and urgent duty to know ourselves. The object of the apostle in the passage that has been before us, is to aid us in doing so. He reminds us there are only two great classes, "Ye are of God—Ye are of the world." To determine to which we belong, he proposes one test, our treatment of the ministry of the word. It is substantially what our Lord said of the Good Shepherd, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." As we recognise His voice in His ministers, we may know we "are of God."

LECTURE XXXI.

“Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love.”—1 JOHN iv. 7, 8.

“**S**PEAKING the truth in love” is the rule which the New Testament prescribes to the Christian minister. The most uncompromising faithfulness is not inconsistent with the greatest tenderness. Our Lord is known as “the faithful and true witness,” yet He was the embodiment of love. He spoke more plainly and severely, yet more affectionately than any other public teacher. In these traits of character John most nearly resembles Him. And we do not need to go beyond the passage before us for an example. Two duties, implying severity, are enjoined in the verses preceding the text. He calls upon the members of the church to exercise a strict vigilance over the faithfulness of its ministers, enjoining them to “try the Spirits.” Then He demands that they shall be no less stringent in judging themselves, whether they are profitable hearers of the word. They should determine whether they are guided by “the spirit of truth, or the spirit of error.” But having thus faithfully called them to these urgent duties, He falls back again on His favourite theme of love, on which He had been previously speaking, and pours out the tender address of the text, “Beloved, let us

love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

There is deep meaning in these sweet words. They assume the fact that Christians love one another, implied in the title "beloved." They urge to the duty of brotherly love, "Let us love one another!" And they assign cogent reasons for the exercise of it, "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Let us enter into these several views.

I. The title "beloved." It comes most naturally from John. It is expected, and felt to be altogether appropriate. He was old, and yet the ardent affection of youth still animated his soul. It is a noble triumph of grace to see this spirit maintained and manifested to the last. John had seen and felt much to disappoint and distress him. How he must have been exercised when he wrote these words—"I wrote unto the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." All this, and much of the same kind, did not cool his warm heart. Its love still came gushing forth as it had done in the days of his divine master. As he had loved Him, he continued to love His people for His sake. Truly, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." And in this John was not singular. He only exemplified a universal and undying principle in the Christian bosom. "Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." As love is natural to the children born and reared in the

same family, so through grace love binds the whole family of Christ together. Wherever His people meet they no sooner interchange their views than their affections flow out to one another. They "love as brethren." And let us learn from John the imperishable nature of this heavenly passion. We must expect, like him, to meet with many things that will damp it. Often it may not be reciprocated. Sometimes it may be misunderstood. Frequently it will be thwarted and hindered. As years advance the ardour of youth may decline. Still the claims of love do not diminish. Nor where piety is genuine are they felt to be less binding. Whatever fails, this affection survives. And it is more or less with all as it was with John, who is said to have been borne to the church when age incapacitated him to walk there, and to have repeated, when he could say no more, "Little children love one another."

II. In this, however, we are anticipating the second remark, the duty of cherishing brotherly love, implied in the exhortation, "Let us love one another."

While love is natural to the gracious soul, and cannot be suppressed, it is yet very susceptible of culture, and may be much strengthened by the exercise of the duty. It has already been suggested how needful the difficulties cast in its way render it to cultivate it. There are temptations from without and weaknesses from within that continually endanger it. And this was well known to the apostle when he delivered the exhortation of the text. How then may it be strengthened?

In reply to this question we have only to consider how love may in any case be increased. It is by contemplating its object, by dwelling much in its presence, and by forming the habit of rendering it service. It is the same, then, with

the gracious as with the natural affection, and it may be well to offer a few remarks on these ways of furthering it.

Love may be increased by contemplating its object. In the present case that object is the believer. Suppose, then, that we consider him thoughtfully, what will be the effect? We think of his position and what is peculiar to it. His advantages and temptations, and duties and responsibilities present themselves to us. As we think of these we feel our interest in him increased. We cannot help sympathizing with him, and praying for him, and helping him as we have the opportunity. Do we not all feel that when any incident occurs, such as sickness or sorrow, to call our attention specially to a friend or neighbour, we are led to an increased interest in him and in whatever appertains to him? One reason of our want of interest in any Christian brother is want of consideration for him. Being aware of this, let us resist it, and by contemplating him awaken our souls to the love that is due to him.

Again, as we are in the presence of a loved object so is our affection increased. We may love those whom we have never seen. Paul expresses the most ardent regard for those whom he had never seen in the flesh, but of whose Christian character and attainments he had been informed. Still, when he met with them and enjoyed their fellowship, his heart was far more knit to them in love. This is natural. We have seen their countenance, we have heard their voice, we have felt their grasp, and our hearts have been bound to theirs. Hence arises the duty of cultivating the society of the godly. Acquaintance will secure many common advantages, and prevent many evils. How often have we cherished a prejudice against some one until it was dissipated by one friendly interview. Brotherly love is compared to the dew in its silent but refreshing and invigorating influence. The more we can enjoy the society of the godly, consistently with other

duties, it will be the better for us. Only let us beware our intercourse is ever such as is fitted to promote edification.

We may add, the more we serve the object we love, the greater will be our attachment to it. It is not merely that habit confirms and increases the grace; but while this is true, every act of kindness we render draws out the heart in greater kindliness. Do we instruct a brother who is ignorant, or visit one that is sick, or clothe and feed some that are hungry and naked, or warn those that we see exposed to temptation, or comfort such as are in sorrow? We will feel in all such services that they become increasingly endeared to us. There is much truth as well as meaning in the Scripture adage, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Whatever benefit may be conferred on the receiver, there is assuredly more on the giver. There is the luxury of doing good. But in the case supposed it is not even the act so much as the motive from which it springs that blesses the doer. It is doing good to a servant of Christ for his Master's sake. It is coming under that promise, "Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall not lose his reward." It is acting on the principle which our Lord has so signalized in His description of the last judgment, and on which He tells us He will pronounce His eternal award, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me."

In this view of the subject might not the apostle well exhort, "Let us love one another." And is his exhortation not as seasonable now as it ever was? It is ever needful, and the means of acting upon it are ever at hand. Let us consider one another. Let us cultivate acquaintance with one another. Let us above all, serve one another. The remedy is simple but it is effectual. Let us use it, and so manifest that we "love one another."

III. Many cogent reasons are assigned by the apostle for the exercise of this duty, which we shall now proceed to consider. He says, "For love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Many reasons are mentioned here, and we shall notice them in their order.

1. "Love is of God." It has its origin in Him. The more we possess it, the more we resemble Him. He is the fountain whence it flows, and as its streams flow in upon us, so are we moved and influenced like Him. To have loved, therefore, is to be God-like. Of all the passions that are the opposite of love, not one is to be found in God. He is indeed said to be angry. He is angry with the wicked every day. But His anger is not as man's. Man's is the excitement of irritated feelings, but His is the calm disapproval of evil. We read, too, of His wrath. "There shall be tribulation and wrath on every soul of man that doeth evil." But this means, the just and unavoidable punishment of the wicked, and is not the passionate infliction of injury for our self-gratification. As for malice, it is ascribed to Him in no form or degree. "He willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn unto him and live." And although He does say, "I will avenge me of mine adversaries," we are not to suppose He takes any pleasure in the punishment of the ungodly, although as the righteous governor of the universe He must assert and uphold and magnify His own laws. These evil passions are of the wicked one, and not of God. They have had their origin in the depravity of the sinner, and the dominion of Satan over him. "Love is of God," and as men would resemble Him, they must derive the same heavenly affection from Him.

2. "Every one that loveth is born of God." If we would resemble God in love, we must be born again, born of the Spirit. Such love as He cherishes is not natural to man.

It is contrary to the spirit and habit of a sinner. True, there is such a thing as natural love, and it is well for the human race that God so ordered it. Were it not for this principle mankind must perish. A husband may love his wife, and a wife may love her husband. Parents may love their children, and children their parents. The same affection may bind friend to friend, and neighbour to neighbour. But this may be where brotherly love is not. We do not undervalue it. Its benefits are numberless. The want of it is disastrous. But it does not contain the essential elements of that love of which we now speak. It exists only in the renewed heart. It is inspired by the Holy Ghost. It is an emanation from God into the soul of man. Its motive is the love of God shed abroad in the heart. Its model is the love of Christ to sinners. Its power is derived from regard to Him. In all its exercises, its gracious nature and source are conspicuous. It is directed mainly to the people of God. It fixes its regards on them, because it sees in them the image of God. It recognizes them as the followers of the Lamb, and therefore desires to journey with them, helping, and being helped by the way. Yet it is not confined to them. It goes out in earnest longings to all the children of men. But in its regard to them, it is actuated as God is actuated. It would serve men as God would serve them. It would do good to the bodies and to the souls of men. Especially, it would save them from their sins. It would suffer for their sake. Nor is it without application to the natural relations of life. It sanctifies and endears them all. It elevates and purifies the love of husband and wife, of parents and children, of neighbours and friends. And let it be added, wherever the soul is born again this love is found. As it cannot be without it, so it cannot be separated from it. It may be said, every one that is born of God loveth, even as it is said, "every one that loveth is born of God."

3. "Every one that loveth knoweth God." To know God is to enjoy Him. Paul said of Christ, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." He means that he had tried Christ, and proved Him, and found Him to be all he needed. So with every one that knoweth God. He is acquainted with Him. He has had experience of His character and perfections. He has heard Him saying, and he has acted on His word—"Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace." He has done so and attained to this precious blessing. All this is testified of the man in whom is the love of God. He has been made like Him by being born again, and he lives in the exercise of the grace in which God also lives. God loves, and he loves. In love God is ever blessing—in love he is ever blessing. So far they are one. There is fellowship between them. "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" They are agreed, so they have communion. And hence, just as love increases and abounds, so does this knowledge of God. The prophet says, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." Let us learn more of God, and grow more like Him, and then shall we enter more heartily into all his ways. We shall understand them more clearly, approve them more cordially, and enjoy them more fully. Our confidence in Him will increase more and more. Many times our own efforts for the good of others may be misunderstood. Whatever we do for them in love may be attributed to the want of it. But when our design is fully developed we are justified before them, and it is admitted all was done in love. So also may it be with God and us. In love He is ever devising and doing the best for us, yet we do not see it always. Let us wait and learn, and still love, and we shall find the saying true—"He that loveth knoweth God."

4. To this it is added, "He that loveth not knoweth not God." This is said in the way of warning and confirmation.

Let no man deceive himself. If there be not love there cannot be the knowledge of God. There are many who presume on their enlightenment, and yet they are manifestly not exercising love. They are learned, but they are captious and selfish, and inactive. Be their attainments what they may, they are destitute of love. For did they possess it, it would move them as it moved the Apostle Paul when he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." It made him renounce everything that was contrary to it, and inconsistent with it, and so will it operate still wherever it dwells. The statement is a universal truth, "He that loveth not knoweth not God."

5. But the weightiest reason of all yet remains, "God is love." Here are three of the simplest words that could be expressed by man, yet their depth no intellect, human or angelic, could fathom. We may exclaim as we think upon them—"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than heaven, what canst thou know? deeper than hell, what canst thou do? The measure thereof is broader than the earth and wider than the sea." "God is love." We say God has wisdom and power and truth, but we do not say and would not say, God is wisdom or power or truth. Yet it were too feeble to say God has love. The truth can be expressed only by saying, "God is love." Yet it is not merely as a strong expression these words are used. They contain a literal and blessed truth. The essence of God is love. Power is a perfection. Wisdom is a perfection. Truth is a perfection. But it would not be sufficient to say love is a perfection. It lies as the substratum of the divine character beneath all the perfections of God. It stimulates and employs them all. It moved wisdom to devise a way of salvation for sinners. What will not love discover? It moved power to execute the plan of wisdom. What will not

love accomplish? It moved justice to assert its claims, and it met them with all their requirements. It engaged the divine mind in conferring the highest blessings on the most degenerate of the human race. And to nothing but to this source can the redemption of the lost be traced, while we cry, "God is love."

And is this the Christian's model? Yes. This is he of whom it is said, "He knoweth God, he is born of God—he is of God." What manner of conversation then must he exhibit? He is "of God," created by Him, dependent on Him, who is love. He is "born of God," born anew by the grace of His Spirit—who is love. "He knoweth God," is acquainted with Him as a friend, lives in communion with Him—who is love. What must He himself be? The ray of light that radiates from the sun is light. The beam of love that sparkles from the eye is love. The child of God, the companion of His Son, the temple of His Spirit, must also in His measure be love. O! how natural for such a one to say—"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love."

LECTURE XXXII.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”—1 JOHN iv. 9, 10.

IN this was manifested the love of God—herein is love.” These two expressions are used to convey the idea that there is one discovery of the divine love far above every other. They do not suppose there is no other. It was exhibited in creation, under the form of the goodness that prompted it, and that adapted it to the happiness of all the creatures. It continues to be seen in the bounties and blessings of the providence that sustains the creatures. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” All the divine works and dispensations proclaim the goodness of God. But it is in redemption His love is specially seen. There His manifestations are such as to excel all others so far that they do not admit of being brought into any comparison with it. Hence the language of the apostle that is now before us. “In this was manifested the love of God,” eminently, conspicuously, and overpoweringly. “Herein is love,” as if comparatively it was to be seen in nothing else, “because that

God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.—Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

It is obviously the design of the apostle in these words to magnify the love of God, by heaping up many expressions illustrative of it under different aspects. Let us then try to enter into His views, following them out in the order in which they are presented to us.

1. First, then, we are reminded, “God sent his Son.” This carries our thoughts back to the time of the sinner’s first extremity. He had broken the law of God, and rendered himself obnoxious to its righteous sentence. He had no claim upon God, he could do nothing to relieve himself, and the help of any other creature in heaven or earth was vain. He might justly have been left without remedy to perish in his sins. It did please God so to act by another class of His rebellious creatures. When the angels sinned, no salvation was provided for them. They were abandoned to their choice. They were doomed to bear the unmitigated consequences of their transgression. “They were reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, till the judgment of the great day.” Toward man the divine dispensation was different. God said of him, “deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.” The counsel of the divine mind in his case is thus unfolded, “He saw there was no man, and wondered there was no intercessor ; therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness, it sustained him.” Of His own motion He sent His Son to save the children of men. Hence it is said, “He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” He did not put Himself in a capacity to save angels, but He did put Himself in a capacity to save men.

It were idle to speculate on the diversity of the divine

dispensations towards angels and men. It must be resolved simply into the sovereignty of God. Perhaps the very diversity of the dispensations was the reason of their adoption. They illustrated separate traits in the divine character. The one proclaimed His mercy, the other His justice. Both together asserted His sovereignty. While the intelligent creation looked on and saw the diverse dispensations, they must have obtained views of God such as they never had before.

Confining our attention, however, to the dealing of God with our own race, how suitably is its origin appealed to by the apostle as a proof of the divine love? It completely meets an objection that is sometimes made to the evangelical view of redemption. It is charged with representing God to be implacable, as though He sternly refused to pardon sin until it was atoned for by the death of His own Son. Our answer is, that while we admit, sin could not be forgiven without doing honour to the law, and character, and government of God, it was He Himself who devised the remedy, and provided it too, by which he might be "just, and the justifier of the ungodly." He proclaimed Himself, "God our Saviour." This was a new discovery in the creation of God. It could not have originated in any other than the divine mind. Since it has been made known "angels desire to look into it," and they contemplate it with glowing rapture. They cry out as they behold the revelation which it makes of the character of God, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." His holiness specially attracts them, but the reason is, that it is seen in harmony with His love. It is not sacrificed while yet love rejoices in salvation. No wonder, therefore, the apostle should say, as he thought of the origin of the economy, "in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his Son into the world."

2. To see this exhibition of love more fully we must consider particularly who it was that was sent on the errand of salvation. The apostle notices with emphasis it was "the only begotten Son of God."

It need scarcely be said this is a view of the subject very frequently and pointedly expressed in the scriptures. Our Lord himself has said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but might have everlasting life." And the Apostle Paul argues thus, "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The Saviour is denominated again and again God's Son, His own Son, His only Son, His only begotten Son, His beloved Son, and these titles are used to elevate our views of the love of God in giving Him to be the Saviour of men.

There are especially two views, which are thus presented to us, well calculated to serve this end. The one is the greatness of the Saviour thus given, and the other is the greatness of the sacrifice in such a gift. These are deserving of a distinct notice.

How great is that Saviour who bears such titles. He is the Son of God in a sense in which no creature can be so called. The title was understood by the Jews to import equality with God. When our Lord claimed it they charged Him with blasphemy and proceeded to stone Him, in conformity, as they believed, with the requirement of the law. Yet even this Saviour was not withheld. An extremity arose which He alone could meet, and He was sent to meet it. What a spectacle it must have been to the intelligent creation to behold the Son of God going out on a mission of mercy to the children of men.

Even this great being was freely devoted as a sacrifice for the salvation of sinners. He felt it to be a sacrifice himself. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am

I straitened till it be accomplished." The Father regarded it in a similar light. He is represented to say, when the eventful hour of the Son's suffering approached—"awake, O! sword, against the shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, smite the Shepherd." The subject is confessedly mysterious. We cannot fathom it. The divine mind must be incapable of suffering. Still, God counted the gift of His Son a sacrifice. This great fact is undeniable. And He did not withhold Him. Nothing else would suffice and it was granted. We can go no farther into this mystery of love. We must wait to see it developed in eternity. In the meantime we can enter into the apostle's statement in some degree and acquiesce in it—that, in "this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son."

3. Peculiar emphasis is laid upon the circumstance that He sent Him "into the world."

In one of our Lord's parables this idea is put prominently forward. He says, "there was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants that they might receive the fruits of it—and the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, they will reverence my son. But they said, this is the heir, come, let us kill him, and seize on his inheritance; and they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." What a picture of the world into which the Son of God came, and of the treatment He received in it. Every preparation was made for his reception in it. For thousands of years the prophets had prepared his way before him. Often had they been evil entreated. But their sufferings were small compared with those which He endured. Think what He must undergo in coming into this world to accomplish His mission

He must take the nature of those who dwell in it ; and how He would feel to wear that humanity which had been defiled by sin. He must dwell with sinners ; and how He must have shrunk from their contamination. He must bear their reproaches ; and how they affected Him when He said, “reproach hath broken my heart.” He must endure their sorrows as well as their crimes ; and how He was agonized by them as He cried, “my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” —“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” He must pass out of it by death ; and how he needed to summon all His fortitude that He might endure the bitterness of the cross. It is only in the words of inspiration we can describe His mission aright—“though he was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” What a comment on the Apostle’s evidence of love, “in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world.”

4. Consider the view which he adds of the object of his mission, “That we might live through him.”

The end was worthy of the means used to secure it. It was life—life in the highest sense—the life which had been forfeited by sin. This comprehensive term is used to describe it, because no other conveys to man so high an idea of blessedness. It includes the removal of the sentence of death, the return of spiritual life to the soul, and the final enjoyment of eternal life in heaven.

The removal of the sentence is the lowest idea of life. Yet it is a high blessing. It is the pardon of sin. Then is it not written, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned ?” See the criminal accused, tried, found

guilty, and condemned. While he trembles and waits for the execution of his sentence, the king's son conveys the tidings of a pardon. How he leaps for joy within his cell, and soon springs out of it into liberty and life. It is so with the pardoned sinner. But he obtains better and more than this in the renewal of spiritual life. The pardoned criminal may retain his depravity, return to his evil courses, and eventually perish in them. Not so the pardoned sinner. His heart is so touched by the love of God that he is made truly penitent. He is born again of the Spirit. He becomes a new creature in Christ. He is rendered holy. He hates the sin that brought upon him the sentence of death. He turns from it. He will not live in it. He delights in God and His service. He is His child once more. And he walks in the light of His countenance. This is the highest happiness of which man is capable on earth. Yet it is only the germ and earnest of eternal life in heaven. There all sin shall be destroyed for ever. As a consequence sorrow shall be unknown. As another consequence happiness shall be complete. All its elements will be fully developed—knowledge, purity, piety, with the companionship of holy and happy beings. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Jesus will be the model and the friend of the redeemed. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Who will not say, "In this was manifested the love of God, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

5. We are farther reminded that in this exhibition of love, there was nothing in man to call it forth, but that it proceeded entirely from God, "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us." The double expression is used to render the statement more forcible.

“Not that we loved God.” There was no approach of the sinner to God. There was no penitence for the sin into which he had fallen. There was no desire for reconciliation with the great Being whom he had offended. He did not ask for it, nor use any means to obtain it. On the contrary, his heart was completely estranged from Him. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Nothing was left to attract the love of God in the sinner. On the contrary, there was everything to repel him from Him. All this is true of the race at large, and of every individual in it. In the history of the fall, it is plain our first parents manifested no proper sense of their sin, nor did they express any desire to be restored to favour. They sought to hide themselves from God. And when the attempt was vain, they defended themselves by excuses and recriminations. The same is found to be the spirit of all their descendants. Every sinner holds out against God and entrenches himself in his own refuges. He renders himself more and more hateful to God. He loves his sin, and left to himself would continue in it for ever. We are forced to acquiesce in the apostle’s words, “Not that we loved God.”

Happily it is added, “but that he loved us.” His own account of the matter is, “When I saw thee in thy blood I said unto thee, live.” This is in full harmony with the history of redemption. It was from God the announcement of it came, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” God saw the misery of man, and the sin that caused it. His compassion was moved for him. He did not turn away from him in wrath, but approached him with pity. He did not allow his depravity to stop the current of the divine love, but in spite of it He showed mercy. “God commendeth his love towards us

in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly." The stupendous revelation was announced to man, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The sovereignty of grace is conspicuous in redemption. And its origin cannot better be described than in the words before us, "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

6. This exhibition of love is completed by the announcement—"and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

This is added with great consideration. It leaves nothing unsaid which it was desirable we should know. When God resolved to express His love to the sinner, He would do it in a way that would secure His own glory, as well as man's salvation. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." God must Himself be justified in justifying the sinner. The intelligent creation must see that it was done in a way that did not compromise Him. For this purpose His Son took our nature, stood in our place, bore our penalty, became our righteousness, magnified the law, "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." When, therefore, Jesus was born and came upon the high errand of redemption, the heavenly host with one accord proclaimed "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men." And it has been so ordered that in every conversion of the sinner to God and his final salvation it may be said, "they glorified God in him."

This is a blessed revelation. It removes every difficulty out of the sinner's way. It assures him that not only may he be saved, but that in no way can he so effectually honour God as by becoming a subject of His grace. He can plead for His own salvation and that of others on the high ground, of which the Psalmist says, "God shall appear in His glory

when he shall build again Zion." May we not then heartily and gratefully acquiesce in the whole testimony which the apostle bears to the love of God, "in this was manifested the love of God, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

How ought we to be affected by this manifestation of the love of God? Surely it ought to make us ashamed of our enmity. It should encourage us to return to God in penitence and faith. It ought to constrain us to love Him who first loved us. It ought to engage all our energies for His service. We may well say, "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead, and that he died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." Nor let us fail to add, if this love be rejected and dishonoured it must fearfully aggravate our guilt. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Fearful beyond all wrath will be "the wrath of the Lamb."

LECTURE XXXIII.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”—1 JOHN iv. 11-13.

VERY often, the highest doctrines are used by the sacred writers to enforce the plainest precepts. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Philippians to “look every man, not at his own things, but the things of others;” and he urges this duty by an appeal to the incarnation and self-denial of Christ, saying, “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It is in the very same connexion the duty of brotherly love is enjoined by the apostle in the verses before us. It is in a discourse upon it he introduces, for the very purpose of deducing an argument from it, a description of the divine love. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” His statement

could not be stronger, and he applies it with its full force to the duty of brotherly love, saying, "beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit."

The views of brotherly love expressed in these words are obviously the following—that it should be exercised by us after the model of the divine love—that in the exercise of it we enjoy communion with God—that it is thus the principle of holy love is carried out into perfection—and that it furnishes evidence of our fellowship with God while it is seen to arise from the indwelling of His Spirit. Let us endeavour to illustrate these thoughts.

I. Love should be exercised by us after the example of the love of God. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

What then were the features of the divine love, and what ought to be those of our love?

The love of God was universal. He expressed it to all, good and bad, worthy and unworthy. He created all, He preserves all, He sent His Son with proffers of mercy and salvation to all. It is worthy of remark that our Lord specially notices this feature of the divine love and recommends it to our imitation. In His sermon on the mount He says, "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The conduct of God toward us is to be the rule of our conduct toward others. We are not to inquire who is worthy, but who is necessitous? The rule is "as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men."

More than this, the love of God has been conspicuous toward his enemies. "When ye were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly—God commendeth His love toward us, in that while ye were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." In this respect also we are bound to imitate the divine example. Christ has expressly enjoined upon His disciples, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." And the apostolic rule is the same, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." The requirement could not be stronger. After the example of God toward us, we must try to turn enmity into love by kindness and benevolence.

This is farther demanded, though it should be at the cost of the greatest self-denial. It need not be asked at what expense did God express His love for sinners? "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Delivered Him up! To humiliation, and suffering, and death. What, then, shall we refuse to suffer for the benefit of others? The argument of John and its application in another part of this epistle are, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Yet it is sometimes a complaint if the demand that is made is only on our time, or patience, or substance, or sympathy. We have much to learn in this matter. Noble examples of self-sacrifice and zeal for others there no doubt have been and still are. But as a prevailing habit it is to be feared it is little known. Let us consider its claims upon us when it is required at our hands.

Nor let us overlook that our love, like God's, should be aggressive. We are not to wait until we are besought. God did not so deal by us. Of His own motion He came to us in mercy. This is true of all the expressions of love, in creation, providence, and redemption. We too should think of them who do not care for us. We should go to them who do not come to us. We should labour for them who would even refuse our kindness. The command is, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

To complete all, love should be constant. Nothing should weary it or cause it to relax. God says, "I the Lord change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." No provocation causes Him to withdraw His love. And it is noticeable the very same spirit is required of us. Peter says, "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." And then he expresses this duty by an appeal to the example of Christ, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." Through good report and bad report His example of untiring and unending beneficence is to be our model.

Were this great principle to prevail among men, what a change would it produce on the earth. It is the panacea for human woe. And let it be borne in mind it is the only one. O! that the words of the apostle were written on the hearts of men, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

II. In the exercise of this love we enjoy communion with God. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us."

The least reflection will show we have drawn the proper

sentiment from these words. "No man hath seen God at any time." This is admitted, although some have had converse with Him under various manifestations of His presence. Moses enjoyed this favour while placed in the cleft of the rock and allowed to hear the proclamation of the name of God. The high-priest enjoyed it when he approached the Shekinah in the most holy place. And we all have been admitted to it in the person of Christ, who is "God manifest in the flesh." Still, as to any perception of God himself, "no man can see him and live." "He is the king, eternal, immortal, invisible"—"dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see ; to whom be honour and power everlasting." Yet, great and glorious as He is, even sinners may have communion with Him. There is a way in which they may have also a sense and an assurance of that communion. It is when under the power of the love of God toward them in Jesus Christ, they put forth the exercise of love toward others. And this is the sentiment before us, and the connexion in which it is introduced. It is as if it had been said, although "no man hath seen God at any time, yet, if we love one another, God dwelleth in us." Understanding the words according to this interpretation, let us endeavour to illustrate the thought contained in them.

They are exactly analogous to a saying of our Lord in His farewell discourse to His disciples. Indeed it must be apparent to all who are versant with the discourses of Christ and the writings of John, that the disciple resembled his master very strongly, not only in his character, but in his sentiments and language. It is so in the matter before us. Our Lord said, "if a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The only difference between the sentiment of John and of Christ is, that the latter

is more general. It unites fellowship with God and obedience, while the former links it with obedience in the special case of brotherly love. Christ says, "if any man love him, and keep his word, his Father will love him, and come to him, and make his abode with him." John says, "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us." It is the latter, the limited example, with which we are at present concerned.

How powerfully is this sentiment expressed by the prophet Isaiah when in his 58th chapter he writes, "Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, break every yoke, deal thy bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out to thy house, when thou seest the naked cover him, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh—then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward—and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Such are the rich and precious promises that are associated with the exercises of brotherly love; nor is it difficult to explain their connexion.

When we engage in duties of brotherly love we are conscious of the divine approval. It is written that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If we engage in that for which we have not any command, we cannot do it in faith, nor consequently out of any regard to the divine authority. On the contrary, when we do that which God has commanded, because He has commanded it, we feel great strength and joy in such obedience. We do it under the light of the Lord's countenance, and in the sunshine of His favour. And this applies to all duties of brotherly love, whether those that relate to our immediate connexions, or the Church of Christ, or the world. All these are commanded,

and in performing them there is the sweet consciousness that we are obeying God.

There is more. There is a sustaining sense of the divine co-operation. God is with us in them. The apostle has said, "We are labourers together with God." Do we impart instruction to our household, or study their comfort, or wait on them in sickness, or labour to supply their necessities, we feel that in all this we are doing the work of the Lord? We are but instruments in His hand. The same may be said of all our endeavours to promote both the temporal and spiritual interests of those with whom we are connected by the bonds of Christian fellowship. We then hear Christ saying unto us, "inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." In like manner, when we go beyond the limits of kindred and church, and extend our labours to a world lying in iniquity, we are sensible that we have the fellowship of their Creator and Redeemer, in all that we undertake on their behalf. We know that He is with us in every act of self-denial, and every aspiration of sanctified benevolence.

We may add, that while conscious of the divine approval and co-operation, we can confidently reckon on the blessing of God. He will bless us and our work! O! how sweetly did the Psalmist celebrate this favour when he said, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." We are sensible there is no reason why the blessedness of the early church may not be always realized, when it is recorded of it, "all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to

house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." When brotherly love abounded God blessed His people. And His blessing was, "as the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion." This is the blessing realized—that "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us."

III. Thus also "his love is perfected in us."

This expression may be understood either of the love of God as it is perfected when it produces love in us, or of our love when it is perfected in the exercises of brotherly love. Let us notice the two thoughts.

The love of God is perfected in us. From the beginning He had a design of love toward every one of His people. But that design is not carried out into completion until His grace secures the heart, and subdues it, and sanctifies it, and fills it with His love, shed abroad there. This may be illustrated in the example of the apostle Paul. There was from the first a purpose of love toward him, but it was not perfected until he was met and arrested on his way to Damascus, and Jesus called upon him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" and he, "trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This is his own account of the divine dealing, "it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." The purpose of love existed at the first, but it was not perfected until it issued in the conversion of Paul. And the same is true of any soul that is saved.

Or the saying before us may be understood of our love when it is perfected in the exercises of brotherly love. The divine love is perfected when it inflames our souls, and makes us like God in love. And our love, thus kindled by the love of God, is perfected in the deeds of charity, to which it prompts

us. The apostle James tells us of the faith of Abraham, "Faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." The principle of faith, dwelling in the soul, was consummated by the deeds to which it stimulated in the life. So also with love. It must be produced in the heart by the Spirit, and then it must be exercised in the conduct. The seed is sown in the ground, grows and brings forth fruit. Thus it is perfected. Faith and love are deposited in the heart, grow there, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Thus they are perfected. Love is perfected in the good services which it renders to our kindred according to the flesh, to our brethren in Christ, and to all mankind. There is all the difference between its existence in the heart, and its expansion in the life, that may be observed between the root of the plant deposited in the soil and its rich and wide spread foliage, and its clusters of flowers or fruits. It is as we "love, not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth," that the "love of God is perfected in us."

IV. In the last place, in our brotherly love we are furnished with the evidence of our fellowship with God, as it is seen to arise out of the indwelling of the Spirit. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

If there be really the exercises of this heavenly principle, they can arise from no other source than the indwelling of God in the soul by the Spirit. Is there a man who longs after the spiritual well-being of his kindred, who can say like Paul, "I could wish myself accursed after the example of Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh?" We may say of him, "God dwells in him, and hath given him of his Spirit." Is there a man who, wherever he sees the image of Christ, loves it, and lingers with it, whose "goodness extendeth to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent,

in whom is all his delight?" we may say of him, "God dwells in him, and hath given him of his Spirit." Is there a man who burns with zeal for the conversion of the soul, and longs and labours to see this world of sin and sorrow holy and happy? we may say of him, "God dwells in him, and hath given him of his Spirit." These are fruits that do not grow on the soil of nature. They are the plants of grace alone, and unmistakably proclaim their heavenly origin. The seal leaves its own impression behind it, and we may know where the Spirit is by the impression which he has left upon the character. He is the Spirit of holiness, and wherever holiness is found there He dwells. He is the Spirit of love, and wherever there is holy love, there is He. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

Let us learn to cultivate this Spirit. It is essential to brotherly love, and all its exercises. Without Him we shall not live after the example of God. Without Him we shall not have communion with God. Without Him His love shall not be perfected in us. Without Him we can have no evidence of fellowship with God. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

LECTURE XXXIV.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."—1 JOHN iv. 14, 15.

IT has sometimes been remarked of the writings of the 17th century, that they are distinguished by being exhaustive. Whatever the subject may be of which they treat, they leave nothing unsaid by which it may be explained or enforced. They completely exhaust it. A similar trait may be said to distinguish this first epistle of John. He presents his subject in all its lights and relations. Without much apparent regard to any systematic order, he advances whatever is calculated to elucidate or apply the truth. The only arrangement appears to be what may be termed suggestive. One thought gives rise to another, and he pursues the course into which he is thus led. There is, therefore, frequently a recurrence to the same topics. But it will be found there is always some variety in the repetition of them. Robert Hall said of a discourse which he heard from Dr. Chalmers, that it reminded him of the kaleidoscope, always presenting the same objects to view, but invariably in new and beautiful combinations. Far more may this happy observation be made regarding this epistle of John. And not to go beyond the text, we are furnished with an example in it, for it rehearses the

same truths that have again and again been considered, but it exhibits them under new aspects.

Four things are chiefly noticeable in it. 1. The evidence borne to the truth—"We have seen and do testify." 2. The truth testified unto—"That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 3. The reception of that truth—"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God." And 4. The consequence of receiving it—"God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Let us try to enter into these precious views.

I. The evidence for the truth. It is two-fold. "We have seen and do testify." We shall notice them separately.

1. "We have seen." The apostles and others had sensible evidence of the truth of the gospel. They heard and saw what fully satisfied them. One of them thus speaks of such evidence, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty, for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." They saw the works of Christ. They were present at His many miracles. They looked upon His person and beheld the verification of ancient prophecy in His character and conduct. They conversed with Him before and after His resurrection. And they were cognisant of the many attestations borne to Him by men, and angels, and God himself. It was impossible they could be deceived. The life of Jesus was a fact about which there could be no mistake. And the words which He was heard to say, and the acts which He was seen to perform, were such as could be ascribed only to the infinite wisdom, and the almighty power, and the unbounded mercy

that manifestly belonged to Him. They saw in Him an all-sufficient Saviour of men.

It may be supposed the early disciples had an advantage over us in the sensible evidence which they enjoyed of the truth of the gospel. No doubt their privileges were high in this respect. And Christ congratulated them upon them when He said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Yet it is doubtful whether our privileges are not greater than theirs. The benefit of their satisfaction is enjoyed by us in the record of it contained in their writings. And it is confirmed by our own experience. They had experience as well as we, but not in the same degree. We have theirs in the record, and we have our own in our personal history. We have found the Saviour to be all that they have declared. There is a sense in which we may say to them as the people of Samaria did to the woman who brought the report of Him from the well of Jacob—"Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. The experience of His grace is the surest and most satisfying and sustaining of all the evidences. It cannot be moved. It is as sure to the believer as the consciousness of His own existence. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

2. There is however the testimony as well as the personal observation of the apostles. "We have seen and do testify," they say. "That which we have heard, and seen, and looked upon, and handled, of the Word of life, declare we unto you." And is not their's a credible testimony? They were competent to observe and report accurately. Of this their writings are full proof. They deserve to be credited. Their character

must place them above all suspicion. They were holy, self-denied, and zealous men. They did not seek their own worldly interests, but sacrificed them for the sake of the cause which they had espoused. They have a claim to be heard and believed, which is wholly irresistible by reasonable and right-minded men. They bore the bitterest persecution with patience and triumph. No earthly consideration could induce them either to be silent, or to alter their testimony. They sought only the good of men and the glory of God. To all threatenings and inflictions of punishment, therefore, they responded, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Pain was nothing. Death was nothing. Still they had the one cry, "we have seen and do testify." They deserve our confidence, and while we give it to them, we put their testimony to the proof. They have told us, Jesus is the bread of life, and in partaking of it we have found their words were true. Our experience not merely supplies the place of their eyes and ears, but confirms their testimony. We have found that the "gospel of Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." Receiving it on the testimony of competent and credible witnesses, we can say from experience, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." Enough then for the evidence. Let us now consider—

II. The truth so attested, "that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

We have in these few and simple words a comprehensive summary of the gospel—its origin in—"the Father sent—its agent—"the Son," its design—"to be the Saviour," and its universal efficacy—"of the world." Let these several views be considered.

1. The origin of the gospel. "The Father sent" the Savi-

our. The Father is mentioned as the representative of the Godhead. Redemption arose from the counsel of the Godhead. It could have no other origin. No created intelligence could have conceived it. How a lost world could be restored in harmony with the law and character and government of God was a problem beyond the solution of men or angels. Still more, the sacrifice demanded for it could have been made only by infinite love. Had it been revealed to the intelligent creation that men might be saved by the death and incarnation of the Son of God, they would have pronounced the sacrifice to be impossible. But the mystery has been solved by the great fact. No speculation is needed on the possibility of the event. It has been done. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

2. In all these passages it is observable how attention is fixed on the agent whom the Father employed. "He sent his Son." He did so, because no other was sufficient. Had it been the most exalted seraph, he could show no qualification for the work. He was sinless, but that of itself would not suffice. He could not take the place of another. He could do nothing beyond the duty required of himself. Even suppose he had undertaken it, he must have failed in it. Not only had he no merit that could be available for others, but he had no power to carry him through the undertaking. The weight of a world's guilt he would be found unable to bear. The Son of God alone could sustain it. He was chosen because He is equal to the task. He is the "fellow of the Father." All divine perfections met in Him.—He was sinless. But beyond this, He was infinite in wisdom, and power, and love. In His humiliation there was a full atonement for

sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." He could enter into every heart. He could uphold every creature. "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The sinner, therefore, knowing in whose hands salvation is placed, may say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

3. This leads us to notice the design of His mission. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour." What a precious name and office. "His name shall be called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins." This is true in every sense. It is a complete salvation which He has provided. He saves from the guilt of sin. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin." He saves us from the punishment of sin. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." He saves us from the power of sin. "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." He saves from the fear of death. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." He saves us from Satan. His own promise is, "I will bruise Satan under your feet." He saves from the condemnation and sufferings of eternity. He puts a new song into the mouth of His people, to be begun on earth and repeated in heaven for ever, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." In the reception

of these truths the sinner may say, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." For to complete this part of the subject, observe—

4. The universal efficacy of the gospel of Christ. "He sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world." The world is the object whose redemption is proposed. There is merit in the death of Jesus to meet the wants of every sinner. It is offered freely to each and to all. There is grace in Christ to subdue and sanctify every soul. The commission of His ministers is to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Nothing is wanted. The sinner is without excuse. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." Redemption is complete. Consider then—

III. The view which the text presents of its reception—
"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God."

It does not follow because the gospel is complete that all shall be saved. Its very completeness will aggravate the condemnation of those who are not saved. A duty is laid upon the sinner, and it is that into which we are now to inquire. What is required of him?

He must receive Christ and His salvation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." When Jesus instituted the Supper to unfold and commend His gospel, He said, "Take, eat." If we do not take and eat, the gospel is preached to us in vain. "He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

If it is inquired what shall he believe, an answer may be found in the text—he is to believe that "Jesus is the Son of

God." The word is short and simple, but it is comprehensive and sufficient. The name "Jesus" may be held expressive of His offices and work, while "the Son of God" denotes His high dignity and competency. Unitedly they proclaim an all-sufficient Saviour. To receive Him is all the sinner needs. It is to put himself in the hands of one "mighty to save." It is to accept the invitation of Christ, "come unto me," and to rest in the assurance that "he that believeth shall be saved."

Yet the character of this faith is not to be overlooked as that is described in the term employed by the apostle, "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God." His faith must be such as will stimulate him to confess Christ. He will be neither ashamed nor afraid to do so if it be genuine. Nor was this an easy test in the days of the apostle. Courage was needed to endure it of no ordinary degree. It could be made only in the face of opposition and persecution. It might well be assumed that those who made it really believed in Jesus. And although our circumstances have much changed since those days of trial, a true confession is still a good test of the reality of faith. It must be made "with the understanding and the spirit." While it is intelligent and hearty, it must be bold and uncompromising. It must be made at all times, in all places, before all persons, and under all circumstances. Wherever the Christian is, he must deport himself as such. He must approve himself a friend and follower of Jesus. He must act in the spirit of the apostle's holy determination when he said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Acting in this spirit he meets the duty of the text, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God." That done, observe—

IV. The blessed consequence—"God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

These terms, so often used by the apostle, express the endeared communion, that arises out of faith in Christ, between the believer and God. God dwells in him by His Spirit. He fills his mind with His own light, and life, and love, and purity. The believer "dwells in God" by faith. He looks to Him, to Him only, to Him always. He says and acts upon it, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." He may be supposed to say, while he contemplates Christ as the medium of his fellowship with God, "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." How blessed must such communion be!

It supposes an enjoyment of the divine favour. The blessed truth is recognized, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." So while the voice of God is heard saying of Christ, "this is my beloved Son," the believer feels that he too is "accepted in the beloved."

It supposes confidence in the divine strength. Waiting upon God in prayer, that he may be enabled to resist temptation and faithfully perform the duties required of him, he is sustained by the assurance, "my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Thus the believer is "strong in God and in the power of his might."

It supposes an earnest effort after the divine holiness. The voice of God is heard saying, "as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation, because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy." Sin is more and more seen to be hateful, and holiness to be increasingly excellent. Nothing will therefore satisfy but to be "partakers of the divine holiness."

It supposes unreserved devotedness to the divine service." The claim is heard and recognized, "yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members

as instruments of righteousness unto God." It is the aim of the believer to do so, for he says, "the love of Christ constraineth me."

It supposes a burning zeal for the divine glory. Paul said, "as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Peter said, "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever." This is the spirit of the man who, confessing Jesus, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

In conclusion, let us inquire at our own hearts whether the truth of the text has found a lodgment there? Have we yielded our assent to the divine testimony? Have we embraced the precious truth testified in the gospel? Have we confessed Christ in the glory of His person, offices, and work? Do we enjoy the communion of the Father, He "dwelling in us, and we in him?" Can we truly say of Christ, "through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father?" With no lower attainments should we be satisfied.

LECTURE XXXV.

“ And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”—1 JOHN iv. 16.

“IT was reserved for the Apostle John to proclaim that the essential attribute of God was love. It had been taught by the Old Testament that ‘the beginning of wisdom was the fear of God ;’ it remained to be taught by the last apostle of the New Testament, that the end of wisdom was the love of God. It had been taught of old time by the Jew and by the heathen, that the divinity was well pleased with the sacrifices, the speculations, and the tortures of man ; it was to John it was left to teach in all its fulness that the one sign of God’s children was ‘the love of the brethren.’ And as it is love that pervades our whole conception of His teaching, so also it pervades our whole conception of His character. We see Him—it is surely no unwarranted fancy—we see Him declining with the declining century ; every sense and faculty waxing feebler, but the one divinest faculty of all burning more and more brightly ; we see it breathing through every look and gesture ; the one animating principle of the atmosphere in which He lives and moves ; earth and heaven, the past, the present, and the future, alike echoing to Him that dying strain of His latest words, ‘we love him because he first loved us.’ And when at last He disappears from our view in the last pages of the sacred volume, ecclesiastical tradition

still lingers in the close ; and in that touching story, not the less impressive, because so familiar to us, we see the aged apostle borne in the arms of His disciples, into the Ephesian assembly, and there repeating over and over again the same saying, ‘little children love one another ;’ till, when asked why he said this and nothing else, he replied in those well known words, fit indeed to be the farewell speech of the beloved disciple, ‘because this is our Lord’s command, and if ye fulfil this nothing else is needed.’”

These words have been quoted from an eloquent volume of discourses, recently published, and they are truly a fitting preface to our consideration of the words before us—“we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Let us notice 1. the evidence of the divine love. 2. Its nature. And 3 its influence. And O ! that we might feel the power of this sacred principle.

I. The evidence—“we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” It is twofold, and we shall consider it as it is expressed in these terms.

1. “We have known the love which God hath to us.” This is the utterance of experience. Knowledge is not merely an opinion, or a conjecture, or a speculation. It implies certainty. Its association is with a fact, the reality of which has been ascertained. It is thus all are accustomed to employ the term in our ordinary conversation with one another. If we say, “I know that man,” it supposes a personal acquaintance founded upon intercourse and experience. Or if we say, “I know that country,” it is assumed that it has been visited, seen, and explored. The term is used in the same way in the Scriptures. Paul says of Christ, “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that

which I have committed to him against that day." He had tried Him and proved Him and found Him to be all he needed and desired. He had experienced His love and knew he might confide in it. He felt he had a friend of whom he could say with exultation and confidence, "I know him."

It will readily be allowed that of all men the Apostle John might use such language respecting the love of God. He had seen it so manifested and had enjoyed it so largely in the person and ministry of His Son, that it might well become the absorbing theme of his contemplations. He had seen "God manifest in the flesh." He had lain on the bosom of Emmanuel. He had conversed with Him, and dwelt with Him during the period of His public ministry. He had heard His discourses, and seen His miracles, and witnessed His devotions. He had observed His untiring zeal, and disinterested labours, and self-denial. Particularly he had been familiar with the deep compassion that moved His never dying sympathy, so that He fed the hungry, and healed the sick, and comforted the sad. He had witnessed His sufferings in life, and His agony in death, and understood that herein "he bare our sins," that we might not be oppressed by them for ever. Surely it was fitting that John should say, "we have known the love that God hath to us."

But this is not peculiar to John. We may know the love of God as well as ^{as}. The Apostle Paul tells us it is "shed abroad in our hearts ^{ing} by the Holy Ghost." This then cannot be without our conscious ^{div} of its existence and blessed influence. Nor is this ^{con}science some mysterious and inexplicable feeling of which ^{we} can give no explanation to satisfy ourselves or others. It arises out of the knowledge of facts as indisputable as any that can come under our observation. And it will be sufficient to advert to some of them.

Confining ourselves to a single passage in the epistle before us, we find the apostle writing thus in chapter v., at the 20th

verse, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true : and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Let it be observed that all these divine verities are declared to be subjects of knowledge. "We know that the Son of God is come." Of this there is no doubt. We can test the fact as well as those who saw Him, for in His life we recognize the fulfilment of the ancient scriptures. "We know that he hath given us an understanding." This is another fact. It is as indisputable as the former. We are conscious of an enlightenment by Him, such as constrains to say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." "We know Him that is true." Through this enlightenment we have obtained a knowledge of the true God. We can acquiesce in our Lord's words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "We know that we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." We are sensible of a vital and saving union with the Son of God, by which we are brought into communion with God himself. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." "We know this is the true God, and eternal life." Jehovah has become known to us as "God our Saviour." And we can testify with Christ, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." We shall not go beyond these divine assurances. We only ask you to observe they are assumed to be the utterances of all those who are truly enlightened in the knowledge of God. And on this single and simple ground we leave the illustration and proof of the apostle's statement, "We have known the love that God hath to us."

2. This, however, is not the only evidence of the divine love. He says further, "We have believed the love that God hath to us." As the former is the evidence of experience

arising out of our own consciousness, the latter is that of testimony borne by other and competent witnesses.

The statement may be understood either of God himself or of those who have had experience of His love. These are the witnesses.

God hath testified to His own love. He has done so in His word. He has assured us that He "willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn unto him and live." Better than words, he has given the evidence of deeds. "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And His testimony is continued and accumulated constantly in the privileges with which we are favoured. Ordinances and opportunities are given to us, so that we may say, "Our lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage." Providence is ever illustrating, and enlarging, and confirming the testimony which God bears to us in attestation of His love.

So also do His people reiterate His testimony. They try to persuade us of its reality. They say, "O taste and see that God is good." They cannot withhold their most earnest testimony. They are impelled alike by zeal for the glory of God and the good of man. They say, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They are all witnesses for the love of God. With one mouth they tell that God is willing to pardon, and purify, and save. Look at Paul before the highest tribunals of the land. He tells unblushingly, again and again, the whole history of his conversion to God. He stands up before philosophers and scoffers, and boldly avows, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Nor is this witness-bearing peculiar to apostles and their times. The godly in every age have united in it. David said, "Come, hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he hath done for my soul." So still. Every one who has

experienced the love of God in his own pardon and purification, can testify of it to others. And we may well believe them. They may say, "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." They are credible witnesses. They have no interest, and no desire to deceive. They seek only to do us good. And a blessed testimony it is they bear,—ever saying with the apostle, "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Satisfied with this double evidence, let us now proceed and consider—

II. The nature of that love to which it testifies. This is set forth in the wondrous words, "God is love."

This is not the first time the apostle uses them. We had them before, and offered some thoughts upon them; but we may dwell upon them again without any repetition. They are a great deep. We can never fathom them. The apostle seems to have fallen back upon them as a sort of relief to his burdened mind. He tried in many ways to illustrate the love of God; but still felt he had not done so to his full satisfaction. So he cries out, as if to say all that words could convey, "God is love."

How do we know that yonder fountain is always full? We do not see it, yet we are sure it is exhaustless. How so? Because it never fails to pour out its waters. Its streams are always flowing, always refreshing, always free. So also do we know that "God is love." The streams never cease to flow, and from them we judge of the fountain. Let us then pursue this illustration for a little, and travel up the streams that conduct us to the exhaustless fountain of divine love.

"God is love." It must be so, or He would not bear with sinners as He does. We are easily provoked. Our patience is soon exhausted. And we abandon the hardened sinner to his ways. "The mercy of God endureth for ever." He is "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish,

but that all should come to repentance." See this ungrateful sinner, abusing the goodness of God and making it the very instrument of sinning against Him with a high hand ! Extend the thoughts to another, and another, and another. Think of the extended, abounding, aggravated iniquity under which the earth groans. Reflect on its continuance, and accumulation, and growing vileness. Add to all this the purity of that omniscient eye which looks upon it all. If it is hateful in our eyes, how it must be in the sight of God ! " Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do evil." We would hurl them to destruction ; but God bears with them. " His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways ; for as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways." We can explain the forbearance of God on no ground but one, and that is, " God is love."

" God is love." It must be so, or He would not pardon as He does. No matter who the sinner be, or what his offence, his cry for forgiveness will not be rejected. He pardons fully. " Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." It is with him as if his sin had never been. He pardons freely. It is only, " ask, and ye shall receive." No price is demanded, no compensation is sought. When once He pardons, He never recalls the sentence. " I the Lord change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Instead of recalling any favour, past mercies are pleaded as a reason for their continuance and increase. " Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, healeth all thy diseases, redeemeth thy life from destruction, crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." How is this to be explained ? There is no way but one, and that is, " God is love."

" God is love." It must be so, or He would never exer-

cise the children of men, as He is pleased to do, for their profit, in the dispensations of His providence. This is true alike of the godly and the ungodly. The godly err, and He chastens them. They grow lukewarm, and He visits them. They are earnest in His service, and He comforts and blesses them. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." The ungodly He warns, and furnishes with instructors, and ordinances, and opportunities. His whole providence is one device of wisdom to accomplish the purposes of His grace. "God is love."

This is the testimony which His people bear. They can all tell of His forbearance, and forgiveness, and grace. And there is one feature in their experience which renders their testimony to Divine love peculiarly precious. It is its variety. Every one of them has his own story to relate. Every believer has a history. As he narrates it he is giving counsel and warning and encouragement to others. It is in this way Christian biography is rendered so captivating and profitable. It speaks to our hearts. It shows us in the fall of others what we are to avoid. It engages us, by their example, to attempt great things for God. It directs us to the rich sources in which they have found unfailing consolation. And all goes to illustrate and commend the one great lesson that "God is love."

III. What, then, should be the influence of this love? And how should it be cherished? The reply is in the remaining clause of the text—"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

We should dwell in God. That is the influence His love should exercise. We should cultivate His fellowship. As we love a fellow-creature we desire his society. His absence is painful, and his presence is our delight. So the love of

God should constrain us to realize His presence, to enjoy the light of His countenance, and to walk in His fear all the day long.

This dwelling in God is to be realized only by dwelling in His love. The Apostle Paul expresses this thought in a remarkable manner in his Epistle to the Ephesians, when he says—"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant unto you, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." By comprehending the love of Christ, we are filled with God. As we see that love, and are influenced by it, we draw nearer to God, and delight more in Him. It is precisely what the apostle expresses in the text, by saying—"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

How, then, are we to dwell in love that we may dwell in God?

We do so as we meditate on the Divine love. It should be our habit to think upon it. The wonder is we can ever forget it. Yet the melancholy fact is we are prone to be unmindful of it. Let us charge our souls to cherish it. Everything should remind us of it, every mercy, and even every trial. We have an example in John. It is clear this was the one great thought that absorbed and possessed him. Our aim should be to dwell in thoughts of love that we may dwell in God.

We should speak of His love. "While I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue." While our thoughts prompt our words, our words react again, and enflame our thoughts. Look at the Epistle before us. The whole discourse is love. Whatever the theme be, that is the connec-

tion in which it is found. God is loved. His image is seen in His people, and they are loved. Whether the subject be God or His people, love is ever the demand. So let us abound in words of love, and we shall dwell in God.

Above all we should live under the power of love, and then truly shall we dwell in God. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto God. The actions thus springing from love bring us near to God." While that is our spirit, and such is our conduct, we find ready access to Him, and delight in Him. He too delights in us. Of such God says—"I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." A communion is begun and maintained on earth, that shall be consummated in heaven. It is only sin that disturbs it here. There no sin shall ever enter, and therefore it shall be interrupted no more. O! how shall the full meaning of the text be then realized and enjoyed—"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

LECTURE XXXVI.

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”—1 JOHN iv. 17, 18.

AT the twelfth verse it is written, “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” Two consequences are ascribed to love, which seem to occupy the mind of the apostle, and to suggest the illustrations which he pursues. Of the first he speaks in the 13th verse, saying, “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit,”—and again in the 15th verse, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God,”—and more strongly still in the 16th verse, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” This reiteration of the same thought is very impressive. He then appears to pass on to the second consequence of love, and speaks of it more fully in the text, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

In dwelling on these words, we may notice, 1. the perfec-

tion of love—"Herein is our love made perfect." 2. the effect or evidence of that perfection,—“that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” 3. The means of attaining to it, “because, as he is, so are we in this world,” and 4. the argument by which the apostle confirms and illustrates his views in the 18th verse. O! that such love as this were attained by us all.

I. “Herein is our love made perfect.”

Love is like every other grace in the Christian bosom, susceptible of various degrees of intensity. It must be in every true disciple, but it is much more ardent and vigorous in some than in others. John was distinguished among the apostles by its prevalence in him. His name has come down to our own day, associated with it as the distinguishing trait of his character.

Even in him, however, it was not perfect. He gave many proofs of its deficiency in his life. He fell short when he proposed to our Lord to call down fire from heaven, and consume a village of the Samaritans, because its inhabitants had refused hospitality to his master. So did he also when he contended for the mastery among the disciples, and when he entreated our Lord to place himself and his brother James, “the one on his right hand, and the other on the left, in his kingdom.” Neither in John nor in any other do we find the perfection of love. Yet he enjoined his hearers to seek it, and the same obligation lies upon us. It is our duty to aim at perfection in all things, and eminently in love. The command is plain, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Faith should be perfect, never doubting the certainty of the divine word. Hope should be perfect, constantly waiting with sanguine expectation for the fulfilment of all the promises. And love should be perfect, burning with inextinguishable ardour toward God

and His people, and all men. Not only is it our duty to aim at such love, but our privilege. Our happiness is bound up in our attainment of it. Just as we advance in this grace we secure our growing peace and prosperity. Only think of the apostle's representation in the verse preceding the text. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." As this grace is cultivated we have fellowship with God. As Paul expresses it, as we are under its power we are "filled with the fulness of God." Surely we should use every means to cherish and strengthen it. We should indulge the meditations, cultivate the feelings, and do the actions which, with the divine blessing, would promote within us the love of God and man. We should keep before us the apostle's words, "herein is our love made perfect."

II. A blessed effect or evidence of such love is next noticed in the text, "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." The connexion is undoubted—that such perfection of love will lead to boldness in the day of judgment.

What are we to understand by the day of judgment? We are certainly not to exclude from our thoughts days of trial, such as may come upon us in the course of life, or at the time of death. Nor can it be doubted that the perfection of love would greatly contribute to our boldness in such periods of temptation and sorrow. But the mind of the apostle is manifestly directed to the final judgment, when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all nations shall be gathered before Him. In that dread hour, they who have cultivated the grace of love shall be enabled to meet it with boldness. It is an important question, How is it so? And we must dwell upon it for a little.

This boldness cannot be said to arise out of love, as the

reason or ground of it. Were it so viewed, its deficiencies would fill us with terror, and cover us with confusion. Neither our love nor any other grace can be pleaded for our acceptance at the bar of God. We can only be "accepted in the beloved." The righteousness of Christ is the ground on which we must stand. Our plea, then, as ever, must be "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Yet there is an important sense in which boldness in the day of judgment is dependent on the cultivation of love. As love is cultivated, the evidence of our union with Christ is manifested. It is very observable that this is precisely the light in which the subject is presented by our Lord himself, in His description of the last judgment. He will address Himself, He tells us, to those on the right hand, saying, "come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and in prison, and ye came unto me." Now observe how they are exercised when He so accosted them. They were not even conscious of the excellence which He ascribed to them, and they disclaimed it as any ground of their confidence. They reply, "when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? or naked, and clothed thee? or sick, and in prison, and came unto thee?" Then He explains how the matter stood, saying, "inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." He appeals to their brotherly love. He recites its acts in their kindness to His people, and He traces it to its source in their love for Him. In other words, He holds in the presence of assembled worlds, that their brotherly love was evidence of their union with Him. In that union, though not in anything which they were or had ever done, they saw the justification of the judge in their acceptance. All intelligent and holy beings

saw and admitted the same. It was seen that God was just when He justified the ungodly, on the ground of their union with Christ, and that union was incontestibly proved by the outgoings of brotherly love, to which it had prompted them.

Suppose His people then to stand before the Judge with clear and admitted evidence of their union with Christ, and you will readily see both the meaning and the force of these words, "herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." We are bold in that dread hour, not because we can plead our love to Christ, but because we can plead His love to us, and prove our interest in it by the influence which it exercised over us. Only think, then, what with such union, and such evidence of it, are the grounds of confidence on which the soul can rest in that hour.

The Judge Himself is the Saviour. In Him we recognize the only being in whom we placed all our hope on the earth. We can adopt the language of the prophet Isaiah and say, "the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." It would seem as if such words were prepared for that very occasion. "The Lord is our judge." He who knows we confided in Himself, is he before whom we stand. None can interfere with Him to pervert or prejudice His judgment. We are in the very hands in which we desire to be. That being who showed such love to us is He who is to pronounce our final sentence. "The Lord is our lawgiver." He will prescribe the rule of judgment at last, as He has prescribed the rule of our conduct upon earth. This rule is His own "holy, and just, and good law." But is not this fitted to terrify us if we are confronted with it in the judgment? No, not if we are conscious of union with Christ. That was the very law of which it is said, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us."

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” The law, therefore, instead of being dreaded as an enemy, is hailed as a friend. We can appeal to it that it is satisfied, that it is “magnified and made honourable.” We can rejoice that our judge is our “lawgiver.” “The Lord is our king.” This is He under whose banner we fought on earth. He is “the Captain of our salvation,” whom we follow as our only leader. Under His wise and gracious government we were enabled to contend successfully against the world, and the devil, and the flesh. He is exalted king over all principalities and powers. We behold Him having “on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.” How, therefore, can we fear when this is our friend? We can say before Him, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing.” So we can add, “He will save us.” The impartial judge, the unbending lawgiver, the triumphant king, “he will save us.” In all these high and holy relations, He is our Saviour. He sustains them all for the purpose of saving those who have put their trust in Him. And on this ground it is that they whose love proves their union with Him can “have boldness in the day of judgment.”

III. It comes now to be an important inquiry how may love be so exercised and advanced as to lead us into this holy and happy boldness? And the answer is in the next clause of the text, “Because as he is, so are we in this world.” It is by studying conformity to Christ our love is strengthened, and the evidence of our union with Him is made clear.

The same remark must be repeated here as before. It is not because we are conformed to Christ we enjoy the assurance of His love. Were the question of personal worthiness

ever entertained, we could only have shame and sorrow. There is in the most advanced so much to humble them that the idea of claim must for ever be repudiated on the ground of anything we are, or have done, or can do.

Yet this is not inconsistent with our enjoyment being made dependent on our conformity to our Lord. It is so on the ground before explained, that it furnishes evidence of our union with Him. So understood, it is not too much to say, that exactly as we resemble Him, so may we hope to enjoy Him. In that resemblance there is the happy evidence of our interest in Him. It both furnishes the evidence of it, and leaves our minds clear to perceive it. It hinders the dark clouds from arising that obscure our faith. And proceeding on this ground, let us consider the obligation of cultivating conformity to Christ.

It is strongly enjoined in the divine Word. In one place the command is, "Grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." He is to be the model of our imitation. Whatever He is seen to be, we are to seek and try to be. Our will is to be swallowed up in His, our views to be taken from His, our life to be assimilated to His. In another place the command runs, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." His character is to cover us. As He appears to men so are we, the same spirit, and desire, and deportment. And so it is said further, "Ye are the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." By observing them men are to learn what Christ is. It would be impossible to use terms more expressive than these of the duty of universal conformity to Christ.

Especially, however, it is seasonable to be reminded here of the obligation of conformity to Him in love. As He was the embodiment of love, so should we also seek to be. Hence in one of its highest and most trying forms it is thus enjoined upon us. "If, when ye do well and suffer for it,

ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." As disciples of Christ, we are bound to persevere in kind offices to others, even where our only return may be injury and contumely.

To such love the promises are most abundant and precious. Only observe the account which Paul gives of himself, and his conduct, and the doctrines which he founded upon it, in 2 Tim. ii. 9-18, " I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds ; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elects' sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." What a spirit of love was there ? And then from his own special case he deduces the general doctrine, " For it is a faithful saying : for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him ; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him ; if we deny him, he will also deny us."

Especially let it be observed how this spirit is associated with hope and confidence in the day of judgment. Paul says to the Romans, " The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." And the language of Peter is even more to the purpose of our argument, " Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you ; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Just as in the spirit of Christ we are willing to bear injury in the exercise of brotherly love, so are our hopes bright for future glory. And we verify the

description of the text, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world."

IV. Let us now notice the argument by which the apostle confirms and illustrates his views in the 18th verse—"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

The argument of the apostle is plain and forcible, and needs only to be stated that it may be perceived. His statement is, that he who cultivates love may expect to have boldness in the day of judgment, and that this boldness shall be in the measure of his conformity to Christ—he being as Christ also was in this world. And to confirm this statement he employs an argument which is fourfold, drawn from the nature of love, the operation of love, the nature of fear, and the operation of fear. Let us notice his views.

1. The nature of love—"There is no fear in love." This is self-evident. A child who perfectly loves his parent has no servile fear of him. He can come to him with holy boldness, and knows he has nothing to dread in his presence. So also where love prevails, God is sought with delight. And in the final judgment when He appears "God in Christ," at once Saviour and judge, He will be hailed with joy. The love that will be felt toward Him will be unmixed with fear.

2. More strongly the same view is presented in the operation of love—"perfect love casteth out fear." The fear of God, understanding it in the evil sense of terror, is natural to man. But let love for Him be conceived and it counteracts that terror. Let it be cherished and strengthened, and as this advancement goes forward, so also will fear be more and more overcome. At length let it be perfect and it will cast out fear altogether. This is what it will be in the day of

judgment. When the judge is seen in His glory as "God our Saviour," the sight will completely captivate the believing soul, and the saying shall be verified in its fullest acceptation, that "perfect love casteth out fear."

3. This view is farther confirmed by the very nature of fear. "Fear hath torment." We avoid the person whom we fear. His presence is painful. If, therefore, there be such fear of God, how awful must the announcement be that summons us to the judgment seat?

4. Finally, the operation of fear is to destroy love. "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." As the one element is introduced the other is destroyed. If fear be allowed to predominate, love will be overcome. It is so towards men upon earth; how much more must it be so toward God, both now and especially when He shall come for judgment?

How powerful then is this argument for the cultivation of love. Would we be happy in God now, and would we meet Him at last with joy? Then let us love Him. Let us see Him in His Son so as to repose our faith and hope in Him. Let us cultivate this feeling until we can regard Him as our friend. Let us indulge it toward His people and all His creatures. This will elevate, and purify, and strengthen it towards Himself. In the end we shall anticipate His very judgment without dread. And so shall we verify the description of the text, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

LECTURE XXXVII.

“We love him, because he first loved us.”—1 JOHN iv. 19.

THAT is a noble saying of the Apostle Paul, descriptive of the believer's spirit of obedience—“now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” It is in full harmony with the sentiment of the Apostle John in the passage before us. He had said in ver. 18, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” Love, and not fear, is the animating principle of a believer's conduct. There is a sense in which the godly man fears God. He cherishes that fear which a loving child has for an honoured parent. It is filial fear, and is composed of reverence and love. But it is free from terror or constraint. He does not serve God because he is afraid of His anger, so much as because he loves Him and His service. The former is not without its influence, but the latter is the impelling motive. The service of God is his choice and delight. It is moreover his duty to cultivate this spirit. He should aim at rising superior to mere fear, and attaining to the supreme dominion of love. And to enforce this duty, as well as to expound this principle, the apostle expresses himself in the language of the text, “we love him, because he first loved us.”

It shall be the object of the present discourse to illustrate

this principle, and our prayer is, that we may be enlightened to understand it, and enabled to act upon it.

1. With this view let it be observed, in the first place, it is a principle exactly suited to our mental constitution.

Take the case of our love to the creature, and whence does it arise? On the strictest observation it will be found that two elements invariably attach, in our apprehension, to the object of it. These are excellence in itself and some advantage arising from it to ourselves. Neither of these alone will produce love. We may admire that which is excellent, but if we have no interest in it we cannot love it. Or we may be grateful for that which confers a benefit upon us, but if it do not possess excellence it cannot call forth love. Even in the natural love of the parent for the child or of the child for the parent, it will be found these two elements exist. A parent sees what he considers to be promising traits of excellence, physical or moral, in his child, and he associates with them the honour and advantage that may thence arise to his child and himself, and so he loves him. In like manner the child sees the good qualities that, in his apprehension, adorn his parent, and he knows these all reflect honour and happiness on himself, and he loves his parent. Relative goodness seems to be essential to love. The idea of loving any object, merely because of its excellence, without any regard to its relation to ourselves, seems to be unnatural to man. We may approve or admire, but we cannot be said to love. It may be said, such a view destroys the disinterested nature of love, and introduces an element of selfishness. Even were this true, it would not set aside a fact of which all must be conscious in their mental constitution. But we do not admit that a regard to our own happiness is of the nature of selfishness. It is in itself good. We ought to seek it. The Creator has implanted it in all His intelligent offspring, in angels, we doubt not, as

well as in men, and it is therefore not blameworthy in either ourselves or others.

Now this is the very ground on which the love of God is based. In himself He possesses all excellence. Every perfection that can command our approval and admiration belongs to Him. In Him we can discover no evil, but all good. But this excellence is all relative to us. In every feature of it we recognise an advantage to ourselves. That unerring wisdom is our guide, that almighty power is our protection, that boundless goodness is our support. All these perfections were exerted in our creation, and are still exercised in our preservation. We look upon them with delight, and say, "This God is our God." And so we acquiesce in the apostle's sentiment—"We love him because he first loved us."

2. In the second place, this principle is as scriptural as it is reasonable. How naturally and properly does David express himself, when he says in the opening of the 18th Psalm—"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised." Excellence upon excellence he discovers in God and celebrates with the highest praise, but every one of them is regarded as a source of benefit to himself. He is strength, and deliverance, and salvation, but he calls Him my strength, and my deliverer, and my salvation. Luther said, with great propriety, the beauty of the Scriptures consists in their pronouns. It would have been a very different exercise had David merely contemplated the divine perfections as so many abstractions in which he had no personal interest. Every one of them, on the contrary, he felt to concern himself deeply, either threatening him with suffering if he disregarded or disobeyed it, or loading him with benefits if he trusted and obeyed it.

We have a great proof of the truth of the Scriptures in what may be termed their naturalness. They never contravene the principles which God has implanted in our natural constitution. Every careful observer may see there is an exact accordance between their revelations and our minds. We speak of order and fitness in the works of creation, and it is a delightful study to trace their adaptation to one another. But in no department of knowledge is the adaptation more complete than between the doctrines of the divine word and our mental faculties. We are constrained to say, as we consider them, of their great and common author, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Men set up theories of high and elevated principles, as they think. They raise them above all earthly and selfish elements. They tell us, for example, how we are to love God, simply and solely for His own excellence, without any regard to our own well-being. They require us to love Him for that excellence even though it may condemn us to unmitigated sorrow. This may sound well in theory, and it may be difficult to disprove it by argument, but it is enough for us to say, the Scriptures do not speak in that strain. They never contradict nor outrage the natural feelings by which we are prompted always to seek our own good, although that must be in a way coincident with the divine character, and government and law. They unite the glory of God and our good. And for an example we need not go beyond the text—"We love him, because he first loved us."

3. In the third place, this principle is well illustrated in the history of redemption. It began with God. The first movement was on His part. When our first parents fell they fled from God, and discovered no disposition to return to Him. But He followed them with proposals of love, and desired their return in penitence and faith. Without their desire, independent of their willingness, and despite of their

apostacy, He proclaimed His great and gracious purpose—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The views of this subject, presented by the Apostle Paul, in Eph. i. 3-6, are very comprehensive and conclusive. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." It would be impossible more forcibly to set forth the sovereignty of redemption. It arose in the electing love of God. It was to be executed by the free grace of God. It was to be consummated by the gratuitous favour of God. All was to be done by God, for man and in man.

Observe, then, the practical effect of such a revelation on the mind of him who becomes concerned about his own redemption. He sees what the mind of God is. He can have no doubt upon the great truth, that "the will of God is his salvation." All doubts and difficulties are at once and forever removed out of his way. He has only to acquiesce in an arrangement that has been made already by unerring wisdom and infinite love. Let him only fall into the hands of God, and he finds himself encompassed by mercy. He is assured of the divine love, and he has only to meet it by a reciprocal affection, and say, "we love him because he first loved us."

4. In the fourth place, the principles of the text apply to every individual who is saved, as well as to the scheme of redemption by which he is saved.

The same apostle, who speaks as we have just heard of the origin of redemption, says of its application to the souls of men—"God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God ; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

How full, distinct, and impressive is this testimony. God has not devised redemption, and then left it to men to receive it if they will, and reject it if they will. The same grace that provided it applies it. He comes to a soul that is dead in sin. It neither sees the blessed provision that has been made for it, nor hears the voice that calls it to partake of it. He quickens it by His Spirit, and makes it alive. It discovers its danger, and is filled with alarm. It discovers the remedy provided, and flies to it. God endows it with faith in it, and in Himself. Thus the soul reposes in peace. Then spring up the fruits of faith in the life. The world is seen in its vanity. Sin is seen in its vileness. The obligations imposed by grace are felt and recognized. The course of holiness is entered upon. The freeness of salvation becomes a powerful motive to pursue it. And the believer approves himself to all men "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

This is substantially the process in the conversion of every soul that becomes a partaker of salvation. Left to itself, it would never return to God. Christ may have died, but it

would be in vain, did not grace influence the heart to embrace Him. Alas! how this is evidenced in the history of thousands around us. They live as though there were no salvation. Their eyes are holden, so that they do not see the Saviour, who is yet present with them. They continue "dead in sin." Blessed be God, He does not suffer it to be so with all. He sends out His light and truth into the hearts of some, so that they can resist no longer. And returning to Him, in penitence and faith, they are constrained to say—"We love Him because He first loved us."

5. In the fifth place, when the soul is thus brought under the power of grace, it continues to be powerfully influenced by its apprehension of the undeserved and gracious love of God.

Gratitude is the first form in which love is apt to appear in the mind of the believer. The question of David is felt to be appropriate—"what shall I render unto God for all his benefits toward me?" Nothing could be more natural than his song, to the new-born soul—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies. A consciousness of salvation awakens these heavenly strains, and wherever it is enjoyed, they cannot be restrained.

But while gratitude is thus exercised, it is not confined to the form of thanksgiving. It advances to other exercises. All the elements that enter into love become developed in the mind. Reverence for God inspires it, and he is regarded with the veneration of love. Esteem takes possession of it, and His excellences are contemplated with the satisfaction of love. Desire is enlarged, and God is sought after with the avidity of love. In this exercise David has said, "my soul

followeth hard after Him." Nothing will satisfy without His presence and fellowship. In a word, He becomes the object not only of desire, but of delight. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." In Him we are reconciled, so that all His perfections are seen to be our guardians and friends. Of the believer, as well as of God, it may be said, "he rests in his love." And it is when God is thus regarded as the God of all grace and consolation it may properly be said—"We love him, because he first loved us."

6. In the last place, everything is so ordered in the life of the believer as to exercise and advance this divine principle.

He is taught to trace up all he enjoys to the gift of God in Christ Jesus. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." He lives in the midst of continual remembrances of God and His love. Contemplate His position, and say what is the influence that ought to be exercised over Him. He looks upon the world in which he has been placed. The marks of sin are many, but the tokens of the Divine love are many more and greater far. If he looks upon the earth he must own it is "full of the goodness of the Lord." If he looks upon the heavens he discerns that they are made "for signs, and for seasons, for days, and for years." He is overwhelmed by the tokens of love that surround him. Everywhere God is present, and He manifests His love.

He thinks upon the providences by which he is encompassed. He is constrained to say of God—"in him we live, and move, and have our being." Daily he is fed and clothed, and protected and comforted. No wonder he should sing with a grateful heart—

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys;
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

He reflects on the dealings of God with his soul. He has had a sensible and constant intercourse with Him. As he has looked for them, he has found unmistakeable answers to his earnest prayers. He has had good cause many times to adopt the language of David, and say—"I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Are there not also many occasions of which the remembrance should cause him to say—"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me ; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord ; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord and righteous, yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple ; I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." It were well for us if we were thus observant of the dealings of the Lord. They would mightily commend and enhance His love.

Nor is it the past only or the present that should thus exercise us, the future also is full of promise. There are "exceeding great and precious promises," as well for time as for eternity, for the body and the soul alike. They are so ordered and expressed that no case can arise to which they are not adapted and addressed. For time the promise is—"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." And for eternity we may say with an apostle—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

who are kept by the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Only suppose that such tokens of love as these are considered thoughtfully and habitually, and what must their influence be? How natural, how irresistible, that we should say, "We love him because he first loved us."

Let me then ask, in conclusion, do we love God? O! remember with what solemnity Christ put that question to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" And to every one of us God puts the same. The evidences of love to Him are distinct, and we should consider whether we can furnish them. We will think much of those whom we love. Is God in all our thoughts? We will be ever considering and consulting for the good and honour of those we love. Is our prayer then earnest and sincere, and do we act in harmony with it, "hallowed be thy name?" Do we act on the command of Christ—"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven?" We desire to practise self-denial on behalf of those we love. Do we deny ourselves that we may promote the cause and honour of God? We long for the presence and enjoyment of those we love. Is it our great aim to come at last into the presence of God, "that we may see no more, as through a glass, darkly, but face to face?" Do we long for the time of which it is said, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is?" Then may we say—"We love him, because he first loved us."

LECTURE XXXVIII.

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also.”—1 JOHN iv. 20, 21.

THE duty of loving God is at once and universally admitted. If we met with a man who denied its obligation, we would count him a monster, and deem it useless to reason with him. The perfections of God are such as to constitute a claim which cannot be refused. All excellences centre in Him. There is nothing wanting, nothing redundant, nothing out of place. “God is a Spirit.” “God is light.” “God is love.” He deserves to be loved for His own intrinsic excellence. On us, however, His claims are specially strong. He made us, He preserves us, and He redeems us. So far as we know our obligations are greater than those of angels. Every day they are increased. And we ought to say with the most unreserved sincerity and earnestness, “we love him, because he first loved us.”

This is admitted. Every one is ready to own the obligation of so speaking and acting. It is this admission to which the text adverts. It is intended to bring it to the test. The test proposed is the love of one another. It is affirmed if this is wanted, we cannot love God. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth

not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

Let us 1. notice the manner in which the lesson of the text is taught, and 2. more fully illustrate the lesson itself. May God be our teacher!

1. The lesson is taught with peculiar force which is deserving of attention. The several clauses of the text are so constructed, as to cast light upon it. Let us notice them separately.

"A man may say, I love God." He may say it and think it, and yet not do it. In that case he is self-deceived. Many, it is to be feared, are found in this class. Or he may say it, and not think it. In such a case he is a hypocrite. This is an offence of high criminality against both God and men.

In the midst of such self-deception, or hypocritical profession the man "may hate his brother." Not only may he have no kindly feeling toward him, but be actuated by a desire to injure him. He would be glad to hear of his misfortune, or would find pleasure in aggravating his distress. Such feelings of hatred are not incompatible with high professions of love to God.

The man who so speaks and acts is pronounced to be "a liar." There is an entire inconsistency between what he says and does. His conduct towards men is a contradiction to his profession toward God. The term used to designate him is one of extreme severity. Both his sin and his character are very strongly denounced. The former is stigmatised as "hatred," and the latter branded with "liar." It is remarkable that of all the writers and speakers in the New Testament, none use language of such severity as John and Christ. They were the gentlest and tenderest of all, yet their

words are more burning, when they denounce sin and sinners, than those of any other. Is not the reason the greater horror with which they regard them? The more pure and holy any being is, the more he hates sin in himself or others.

An argument is next used to prove the inconsistency of professing love to God, while hatred is indulged to men. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" This is assumed to be an impossibility. And it really is so. His brother is the child of God. He made him and he loves him. He sustains him by His bounty, and He sent His own Son to save him. Can I love a man and hate his child? Especially if I see the image of the father in the child, it will render hatred both more impossible and inexcusable. In creating him then, God stamped His own image on every brother, and if He has created him anew in Christ Jesus, it increases the deformity of hatred. My brother is to me the representative of God, and in hating him I hate God. His intercourse with me renders this hatred all the more vile. I see him, and hear him, and converse with him, and all this familiarity should increase my sympathy. I cannot hate him unless I know him. If, then, with all the inducements that I have to love him, I indulge in hatred, how can I deceive myself by supposing I love God, whose he is, and whom I have never seen, except in the creatures whom He has made, and in my brother especially?

To confirm the argument, it is added, "and this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." We say we love God. Of that love the great proof is that "we keep his commandments." But one of His commandments is, that we love one another. How then can we say we love Him if we do not obey him, and if, instead of loving, as He requires, we hate our brother, which

He forbids? The hollowness of such a profession must be obvious.

Such is the manner in which the lesson of the text is taught. It is impossible to observe it without being impressed by its variety, and its earnestness. It proclaims loudly the importance attached to it. And we are, therefore, thus prepared now to consider more fully—

II. The lesson that is taught, namely, the incompatibility of the love of God with the hatred of men.

It is to be feared that, in this matter, a wide-spread delusion prevails among men. Many say they love God, who are seen to hate men. It may be well, therefore, to notice some of the principal forms under which this incongruity has appeared in both past times and the present.

1. A remarkable example of it may be seen in the national spirit that prevailed among the Jews in the time of our Lord and His apostles. When Christ conversed with the woman of Samaria, and asked an office of kindness from her, she at once urged the proverb, "the Jews have no dealing with the Samaritans." This spirit unhappily pervaded the whole intercourse of those communities. The Jews carried themselves with a haughty reserve; which the Samaritans resisted by a proud defiance. The Jew founded his intolerant and exclusive claim on his more immediate relation to God as one of His chosen people. He made professions of great zeal for God. He made long prayers, waited on the ordinances of religion with the most scrupulous exactness, and rendered his contributions to the service of the sanctuary without any abatement. Yet amid all these services, he was unkind, and selfish, and injurious, and unjust. Nay, he made his very religion a pretext for his sins. He held that its requirements made it necessary for him to treat his fellow-creatures as he did. And he took credit to himself for acting with asperity

and ill-will to man ; while he was loud in professions of zeal and love for God. It is deserving of special observation that this is the very spirit so severely denounced by Christ in the people of his day. “ Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers ; woe unto you, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte ; and when he is made ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves ; woe unto you, for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith ; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” Here, therefore, is a case precisely in point. The Jew said he loved God, and yet he was injurious to men. And so far did this spirit prevail that it formed the national character in the time of our Lord.

2. This habit, however, did not arise out of any thing peculiar to Judaism ; for, it may be observed next, that it is found to prevail in all unenlightened nations. What is the spirit of Mohammedanism ? The Musselman, out of zeal for God, as he alleges, goes forth with his sword to demand subjection from all men ; and, when he has the power, to plunge it into the bosom of any one who dares to resist him. It is the same under other and more aggravated forms in nations that are purely heathen. The Hindoo, out of zeal for God, refuses to eat with his brother of another caste, lest he should be defiled. The Chinaman has been taught from his infancy to reckon all men barbarians beyond the boundaries of his own land. All heathen people entertain the same idea of religion. They regard it as a service of certain forms due to God ; but which, it never occurs to them, is designed to regulate their deportment toward one another. The universality of this notion deserves special attention. It is a most humiliating discovery of the natural disposition of the human mind.

Something is considered to be due to a supreme being. But of what is due to His creatures, out of regard to Him, there seems to be no just conception. The love of God, prompting love to mankind, is nowhere to be found, even as a theory, among men devoid of revelation. Greece and Rome, at the height of their enlightenment, made no such discovery. It is humiliating to see the vanity of their worship, which was neither intended nor fitted to influence their conduct toward men. We may suppose it to be an easy thing to see the connection between the love of God and the love of man. But we should remember we are indebted for the knowledge of it entirely to the divine word. It must be referred to the commandment of God, "that he who loveth God shall love his brother also."

3. But, alas! even where the light of revelation shines, this simple truth has been sadly obscured. Take the so-called Christian nations, and what has been their spirit, and what their conduct one toward another? We have been accustomed to speak of our hereditary enemies. Men have thought that, because they had been born and lived within certain geographical boundaries, they were not required to seek the good, but rather the injury of those beyond them. This is a sad contemplation, and shews us what is in man. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth." Every man is the brother of every other man. It is the will of God that he should act upon this principle. He has put His word into our hands to teach us this lesson. Yet with all the light which nations, nominally Christian, have enjoyed, what has been their conduct? They have been ready to take offence, if not to give it to one another. They have studied the art of war, the purpose of which is to destroy one another. They have considered themselves freed from the obligations of brotherly love, because they inhabited different countries. They have engaged in the most savage attacks upon one another, in the name of religion. They have gone

to bloody wars from the temples dedicated to God, and they have returned from them to give Him thanks for the slaughter of their fellow-men. Nations have acted as if they had forgotten they were the children of a common father, placed under the guidance of a common revelation, and accountable to a common judge. The men most honoured hitherto, have been the most successful in the science of human destruction. And it has been pleaded that this was done for the honour of God, and the preservation of religion. How necessary it is that the nations should learn the lesson of the text—"that he who loveth God, love his brother also."

4. We may go, however, for another illustration beyond the nations of the earth, and fix upon the Christian churches themselves. To take a marked example, kindred to those already considered, what is the church of Rome? We do not speak of individuals. Many members of it may escape the contagion of the system, and, while nominally under it, may really cherish another spirit. We trust there are many such. But view it as a system, governed by its priesthood, and what is its prominent characteristic, in its conduct toward men? It has been often described, and not unjustly, as a conspiracy against the liberties of mankind. It forbids mental liberty. Men must not think, but under its dictation. It forbids moral liberty. The plea of conscience is not heard at its tribunal. It forbids civil liberty. Princes must submit themselves to priests, and so must all their people. Wherever it has power it enforces its demands by sufferings. Persecution has been its ready instrument wherever it could be exercised with impunity. The Inquisition has been set up and maintained in all its brutal tortures under the name of zeal for God and religion. Death, under every form of bitterness, has been inflicted, for the sake of upholding what was declared to be the truth of God. It could not have been believed, had it not been witnessed, that such atrocities could ever have

been committed in the name of Him who, when His disciples were offended and asked Him to call down fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village, replied, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." It is all the more dreadful, that scenes such as these have been enacted by men, sometimes under a stern conviction that they were in duty bound so to act. No doubt there have been such men. But what does that prove? Even admitting that in all cases the persecutor was sincere, what does it prove? It proves the awful perversity of the human mind. It proves that men may be under Christianity, as Paul was under Judaism, so blinded as to believe that they were bound to "do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It proves how powerful is the propensity of men to separate what God has joined together, the love of God and the love of man, and how needful it is to be reminded of the words of the text, "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

5. But we must come closer still. One illustration remains, and we shall derive it from the best and the purest churches of Christ. We will turn to those that hate war among the nations of the earth, and not less persecution in the church, who take the word of God for their guide, and profess subjection to all its requirements. We look at their conduct, and how often do we find it at variance with their profession? They say they love God, and we admit they are sincere, but how far short do they come in the love which they owe to men? There are many forms under which their inconsistencies appear, and we shall advert to some of them.

In some we discover the most uncharitable zeal for their doctrines. They construct a system which they hold, is founded on the word of God, and agreeable to it. Admit that it is so. Its views, they maintain, are essential to salva-

tion. Admit that they are so. Forthwith they proceed to denounce all who do not see with them eye to eye. A singular bitterness marks their denunciation. It looks as if they found pleasure in it. Is this the spirit of the word? Assuredly not. Its rule is, "Speaking the truth in love," or, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." We have need to be watchful lest our love for God, in maintaining His truth, should degenerate into bitterness against men.

In others, again, we discern the uncharitableness of sect. The old cry is that of human nature, under the gospel as well as the law, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we." All who are within their enclosure, they can esteem and love. But those who are beyond it, they cannot but suspect. If they do good, it is doubtful, they fear, whether it may be real. If they do evil, it is only what was to be expected. Thus under the garb of love to God, there may be much unkindness and injustice to men.

We may go further, and find an example even among those who hold the same truths, and worship in the same sanctuary. What means the warning of Christ, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift, go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come, and offer thy gift." We may profess love to God in His ordinance, and yet be indulging ill-will to our brother. Worse than that, we may do him much injury. We may injure him in his good name, in his property, in his peace, and still maintain the profession of love for God.

It were indeed endless to pursue these illustrations. They are numberless as the inconsistencies of men. And we need to be watchful on every hand, that we are not in some form or another betrayed into them.

In conclusion, let me only urge the duty of carefully considering the inseparable connection which God has established between the love of Himself, and of His creatures. The former is the foundation of the latter. Wherever it has been opened streams of love should ever be found to flow toward men. If they do not, there must be some sad deficiency. If instead of love there be hatred, we have cause to suspect that all is wrong. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this is his commandment, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

LECTURE XXXIX.

“ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God : and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”—1 JOHN V. 1.

THIS verse may be said to contain the theory of brotherly love. In other parts of the Epistle it is referred to and explained, and enforced, but nowhere is it so fully expressed as here. We have seen it represented as necessarily arising out of love to God. Thus, “ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen ? ” It is assumed that the love of God cannot exist without love to man. This assumption is alike reasonable and scriptural, for in both exercises it is only the one principle going forth in different directions. They are two streams issuing from the same fountain. Not only is there this necessary connection between them, but both are required by the same divine and supreme authority. Thus, “ This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.” For a man, therefore, to say he loveth God while he hateth his brother, is to say he loves that God whom he disobeys and dishonours. Still, necessary as brotherly love is, and strongly as it is required, there is only one way in which it can be secured. This is what is explained in the text. Hence we have said it contains the theory of brotherly love. As such, then, let us consider it. “ Whosoever

believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God ; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Four things are here associated, and said to arise out of one another, faith, regeneration, the love of God, and the love of man. Let us consider them separately.

I. Faith, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ."

To believe that Jesus is the Christ, is to acknowledge that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. An interesting exercise of mind is therefore implied in arriving at this conclusion. There is supposed to be an acquaintance with the life of Christ and the principal features by which it is distinguished. These are further supposed to be brought to the light and test of the ancient prophecies. On inquiry it is found there is an exact coincidence between them. Jesus is found to be all that the Scripture predictions declared the Messiah should be. His life dovetails into the prophecies of the Old Testament. They who discover this harmony can say, "we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph," "we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Here, then, is a condition of mind, seen to be under the authority of the word of God, and satisfied with the testimony which it bears to the person and character of the promised Saviour.

Even in this state of mind there are the elements of much excellence and rich promise, but there is far more in the reception of Jesus as the Christ. He is acknowledged, not merely in general terms, as a divine Saviour; but He is appreciated in the special offices which He bears for the redemption of men. "His name is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins;" but when there is an intelligent reception of Him as the Christ, there is implied a distinct

apprehension of the manner in which salvation is secured by Him. The term means literally, the anointed. This interpretation at once awakens our attention to the associations connected with the practice of anointing with oil. We find that it was used in the appointment of the prophets, priests, and kings. Hence when applied to Jesus it becomes significant of the offices which He assumed, and still exercises as the Saviour of men. It presents Him to us as the prophet, priest and king of the church, and this at once both enlarges our views and gives them distinctness.

The least reflection on these offices will confirm this remark. Is Christ the prophet of the church? Then we are indebted to Him for all the knowledge we possess. He has given us the Scriptures, and the ordinances, and the ministry. He is the great teacher, at whose feet we sit whilst He proclaims—"He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Is He the priest of the church? Then in His sacrifice alone can we trust, and by His intercession alone can we draw nigh to God. We hear Him saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." We acquiesce in the divine testimony that by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We say, with the spirit and the understanding, "it is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Is He the king of the church? Then we submit to His authority. We learn to say, "O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." While we take Him for our only master we trust in Him for protection and deliverance. We own Him as "head over all things to the church." We can discern "upon his vesture and on his thigh the name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." We see that all things

are at His disposal and under His control, and therefore we do not fear.

Such, now, are the exercises of mind implied in the phrase, "Believing that Jesus is the Christ." They suppose a divine illumination. They involve a clear perception and hearty acquiescence in the way of salvation. They lead the soul to say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." These are the views of faith in the text. And they prepare us to consider,—

II. The regeneration connected with it, "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Faith and regeneration are united. This view is brought out still more fully in the opening of the gospel of John. In the first chapter at the 12th and 13th verses it is recorded—"As many as received him (Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They received Him by believing on Him, and in the act of receiving Him they underwent a change which could not be produced either by themselves or others, but by God—they were born of Him. This is assumed as a fact of undoubted certainty.

It has sometimes been subject of discussion whether faith or regeneration is first produced in the mind, and so whether faith is the result of regeneration, or regeneration of faith. It is an unprofitable controversy, into which we decline to enter. It is enough for us to know that whatever the mental process may be in the production of the one or the other, they are invariably found together. Wherever the one is there is the other. Every one who believeth is born again, and every one who is born of God believes on Jesus.

But while it would be useless to discuss the order of these graces, it may be very instructive to consider their connexion

Let us therefore observe the influences under which the mind is brought when it believes that Jesus is the Christ, as has been explained, and we must see how naturally the work of regeneration is connected with them.

In the case supposed the mind is in pursuit of a Saviour. It has been brought to feel its sinfulness, and to cry, "What must I do to be saved?" It cannot remain longer "dead in sin," but is constrained to inquire—"Wherewithal shall I come before God? or bow myself before the most High?"

In pursuing this inquiry it addresses itself to the divine word. It is learned that here only is truth. The great question therefore is, "how is it written?" The mind is prepared to submit to the way of salvation, as it shall be found revealed there.

Thus exercised it is soon discovered that our Lord said truly, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." He is seen to be the great subject of the word. The Messiah of the Old Testament is seen to be the Christ of the New. He is proposed as the Almighty Saviour. More particularly He is commended as the unerring prophet, the accepted priest, and the Almighty King. As such he is received by faith. Observe, then, the moral influence thus exercised, and how naturally the regeneration of the soul is effected in connexion with this reception of Christ.

He is received as a prophet. The only inquiry therefore is, "What saith the Lord?" The proud reasoning of the natural mind is at once abandoned. The apostle is admitted to speak truly when he says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Prayer for divine teaching is begun and continued. The word is read with the spirit and supplication of David, when he said, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What,

then, will be the influence thus exercised, and the effect produced. We cannot wonder if a flood of light is poured into that mind. It is thirsting for it, and prepared to receive it. We expect to hear such a one say, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."

Again, by this anxious inquirer Christ is received as a priest. He is deeply sensible of the injury he has done, by his sin, to the divine law, and character, and honour, and government. His great inquiry is whether there is any way in which his sin can be pardoned without compromising these. He meets with the announcement, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." The more he reflects on this wondrous provision, it satisfies him more. There is everything in it to secure the honour of God on the one hand, and his safety on the other. He acquiesces in it. He accepts it thankfully as his hope. He is reconciled by it to God. He has peace with Him. He is brought under the dominion of love. He hears the appeal, and gladly responds to it—"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are his." Who can estimate the power of this influence?

But this is not all. Christ is accepted as a king. He is so owned because He is entitled to reign in the heart. At the same time our safety depends on Him. He is, therefore, followed as the "Captain of salvation," both for His sake and our own. All things conspire to recommend and endear His service.

We ask, then, what must be the moral effect produced by thus accepting Christ in His gracious offices? It is plain it

must be vital and saving. We see at once how just and reasonable is the representation of the text—that faith and regeneration are united, and we concur in the doctrine that “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

III. It is equally plain that in every mind thus influenced the love of God obtains a prominent place. This is taught in the text in the most forcible manner, for it is assumed—“Every one that loveth him that begat.” The apostle does not think it necessary to say, “Every one that is born of God loveth him.” He takes it for granted that it must be so, and all who apprehend the doctrine will admit it to be so. He says, “Every one (of them) loveth him that begat.” Let us, therefore, consider how naturally such is the effect.

It must be so, considering the change that has been produced. It is a new birth. The man has become a new creature. He has passed from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the power of Satan unto God. All things are seen in a new light. All things are felt to sustain a new relation. God is seen to be the only master who can claim unreserved obedience. A mind thus influenced and enlightened must love God.

Especially must it be so when it is considered that He is the author of this change. The sinner is born again of God. In His gracious love He has been pleased to put forth His power and create the soul anew in righteousness. There was no reason in the soul itself why He should do so. There was nothing to attract Him. On the contrary, there was everything to repulse Him. He was not even asked to do it. It proceeded from His sovereign pleasure. How calculated is such a contemplation to call forth the warmest exercise of love? We cannot but feel strongly towards the author of our greatest benefits, and especially are we impelled to do so

if we know He conferred them unasked and undeserved. How, then, must we love God, who, out of pure compassion, put forth His mighty power, and made good His blessed promise—"A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Add to this, that when such a change is effected in the soul by God, it brings us into a new relation to Him, and one that eminently calls forth our love. It is that of a child. We look up to Him, as soon as it is produced and say, "Abba, Father." It is natural to a child to love his parent. If there be not love there must be a fearful overthrow of all right principle. But what parent is so entitled to the love of his child, as God to that of his new-born soul? He is our Father by creation, and so also by providence, but it is when He becomes our Father by redemption, by regeneration, by adoption, that His claims are specially felt. Well may he be heard saying, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?"

Nor let it be overlooked how God is continually increasing His claims on His own children. They are constrained to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." They hear Him ever saying—"I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

What then must be the effect of all this gracious dealing? It must be love. The apostle does not err in assuming that when the sinner "believes that Jesus is the Christ, and is born of God," he "loveth him of whom he is begotten." Nor does his love end with God. It remains to be considered—

IV. That the love of God is accompanied by the love of man. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

This sentiment may be applied to the love of all men, by which the believer is actuated. In this respect he is conformed to his heavenly Father. God does good to all. He has compassion upon all. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In this He is an example to all His children. And they imitate Him. The bowels of their compassion are poured out upon the helpless children of men, and they long to see them blessed, both temporally and spiritually.

At the same time, while this is all freely admitted, it must be seen that the text refers to the special love which the believer exercises towards the children of God. He loves all and would serve all, but he is bound by peculiar ties to those who, like himself, have been begotten of Divine grace. And it is easy to account for this peculiarity of feeling and treatment.

He only yields to nature when he loves the children of God. Suppose a child to be introduced to us, as that of a friend dearly beloved. The very announcement binds our hearts to him. But suppose, as we gaze upon him, we trace the lineaments of the honoured parent in his child, just as the resemblance grows upon our eye so does love upon our heart. So then it is with all believers. They are the children of God, and we see His image in them. We love them, therefore, for their Father's sake, and fully justify the apostle's sentiment—"That every one who loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

There is another reason equally forcible. We have sympathy with the people of God, which the Christian can have with no other. They have the same views, the same feelings, the same interests, the same fears and hopes. We know how

strong is the attachment, even among worldly or wicked men, growing out of similarity of tastes and pursuits; and how much more may the same be expected in the godly? We see it in the early Church. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." This is the model on which the fellowship of believers in all ages is formed. It may be more or less genuine, or active, or tender, but it is essentially the same in all conditions.

Above all, they hope to dwell in heaven together for ever, and therefore their hearts are knit together in love. They are to sing one song, to join in the same exercises, to be sharers of the same joys. They are "heirs together of the grace of life." They shall come at length to one heritage. O! how just then the doctrine of the text—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Let us learn to unite these four graces—faith, regeneration, the love of God, and the love of man. God has joined them together. Let not man put them asunder. They must be produced together. They ought to be cherished together. Where one is not, they all are not. Where one is they all are. May they be in us and abound through grace!

LECTURE XL.

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”—1 JOHN V. 2, 3.

THE love of “the children of God” is an essential element of the Christian character. It cannot exist without it. The apostle is therefore at pains to explain how it is produced in the mind. He traces it through faith and regeneration and the love of God, and shows how it results from these principles. The sinner is led to “believe that Jesus is the Christ,” so that discovering in Him an all-sufficient Saviour, he embraces Him as his prophet, priest, and king. This faith in Jesus is accompanied by the great moral change of regeneration. While the mind clearly discerns the truth, the heart is brought under its power and sanctified by it. This great change is felt to be due to sovereign grace. It is freely acknowledged, to the glory of God, that “he hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Gratitude is thus awakened in the soul. “We love him, because he first loved us.” The progress to the love of his children is thence natural and easy. We love the child of our friend as we love the parent. “Whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” This is the theory by which we account for the love of the brethren.

Being thus inseparably connected with the great principle

of the gospel, so that wherever they are received it must prevail, it becomes a question of great practical moment, how shall we be certified that we love the brethren? To reply to this inquiry seems to be the specific object of the verses now to be considered. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."

Contemplating the verses in this connection they suggest four evidences—the love of God, obedience to His commandments, and therefore obeying Him, and esteeming His commandments to be not grievous. Let us consider these four evidences that we do really love the children of God.

I. The first is that we love God. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God."

It must seem strange, at first sight, to find the love of God cited as a proof of the love of His people. We would expect rather the reverse order, and that the love of the brethren would be regarded as the proof of our love of God. This too is found to be the usual practice. Again and again the apostle presents the subject in this light. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

This is admitted to be the usual view of the subject. At the same time there is a sense in which the love of God ought to be sought in our hearts as a proof of the love of His people. It is one that will readily occur to a mind jealous of itself, and desirous to be assured that its love of the brethren is really the genuine work of the Spirit. It is not unnatural that such a one should ask, does his love of the people of God arise out of the love of God? In this view he might properly seek for the love of God as a proof of the love of the brethren.

And it was no doubt in this sense the apostle taught his readers to do so.

The least reflection may show the necessity for such an inquiry. Brotherly love, or what appears to be such, may arise from other sources besides the love of God. It may be a natural feeling and not a gracious affection. The inferior animals love their young, and many of them love one another. But we would never ascribe any moral virtue to such an affection. No more can it be ascribed to the natural feeling by which many of the children of men are bound to one another. The parent may love his child and the child his parent, the husband his wife and the wife her husband, and yet in none of them may there be the love of God. Such affections are found in savages who do not even know the true God. In like manner they may be extended to other relations of life. We may love our friends, and neighbours, and benefactors, and yet not love God. It is possible there may be even an active benevolence where this heavenly principle does not exist. It must therefore be seen the apostle proposes a most proper and profitable inquiry, when he would have us to examine whether our apparent acts of brotherly love do really proceed from the love of God. And this seems to be his sentiment when he says, "by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God."

It will be asked how is such a subject to be investigated? And we reply in one of two ways, or in both. It may be either by examining whether our deeds of brotherly love are prompted and influenced by the love of God; or by inquiring into the general principle, whether the love of God has ever been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Let us glance for a moment at each.

It surely cannot be thought unreasonable to call ourselves to the test whether, when we do good to others, we are acting from the love of God. Alas! there is much reason for it.

Our Lord tells us of the Pharisees, "all these things they do to be seen of men." It may be the same with us. He knew well what He meant when He said, "let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth." Or we may be benevolent from mere self-gratification. It relieves us to relieve others. Or it may proceed from self-righteousness, and we may hope by our labours to recommend ourselves to God. These dangers are sufficient to put us on our guard. We need to scrutinize both our actions and their principles and motives. The rule is, "whatever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men." We must test our "love of the children of God" by inquiring whether we "love God."

Or the subject may be pursued by an inquiry into our love of God. Do we love God? That was the question our Lord put to Peter, and He puts the same to us. He replied, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And we ought to be able to say the same. How shall we attain to it? One way is by our own consciousness, in the very way by which we are sure we love a fellow-creature. Another is by observing the habits of our minds. We think much of those whom we love. Is God ever in our thoughts? Do we like to think upon Him? Does every event remind us of Him? Above all, we may test our love of God by inquiring whether it is our habitual aim to please Him. It is so with us towards those whom we love. We will not do what is disagreeable to them. We will do what is agreeable. And it is the very same in our relation to God.

It is easy to see the application of this subject to the apostle's test. It may be expressed in a sentence. In that which we account, "the love of the children of God," have we a respect to God Himself? Does that which we feel and do for them, proceed from a regard to Him? So far as it does we may say, "by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God."

II. In the second place, the profession of brotherly love may be tested by obedience to the commandments of God. "We know that we love the children of God when we love God, and keep his commandments."

Viewing the subject in the restricted light of the context, the meaning of this test must be, that in our exercises of brotherly love, we are guided by the commandments of God. Assuming this to be the just interpretation, there are two aspects in which our conduct may be contemplated, the one a refusal to do that which God forbids, although it may be desired as an expression of brotherly love, and the other, a readiness to exercise it in every way which God has required. These may be noticed separately.

We may be solicited to render a service, which our duty to God forbids. This is not uncommon. It is very possible, too, that our conduct in refusing may be attributed to the want of that very affection from which in reality it springs. When Daniel refused to comply with the order of the king to address his prayer to him only, no doubt it was ascribed to disloyalty and perverseness of will. When the apostles would and did preach Christ, though forbidden to do so, they were charged with the confusion and other dreadful consequences that resulted from the agitation of the public mind, and the disturbance of the public peace. Superficial onlookers would ascribe the conduct of both these parties to the want of right feelings towards other men, in short, to the want of brotherly love. Yet in reality it was true brotherly love that animated them. They would not oblige men or please them, by disobeying God. They set us an example that we must show our love of the children of God, by our love of God, manifested in refusing to disobey Him. We can never serve our fellow-creature by doing, even at his most urgent entreaty, what God forbids. The highest service we can render him in such a case, is to refuse his request.

Paul would not yield to the desire of Peter, but "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." And let us not suppose we may not be called to a similar duty. One asks us to forego our plain and full testimony to an important truth. We must not do it, however it may give offence. Another asks our observance of some human ceremony in the worship of God. We must refuse compliance, be the consequence what confusion or displeasure it may. Some whom we love, entreat us for the sake of good fellowship to yield a little to the customs of the society in which we are placed, but which we hold and feel to be inconsistent with the honour of religion, and our own edification, and the profit of others. We must not consent. We know that by yielding in any of all these instances, we do a real injury to those who would yet accept our compliance as an expression of love and friendship. But it is a mistake. We must stand upon the right principle, and prove that we "love the children of God, by loving God, and keeping his commandments."

On the other hand, we must evidence this love, not merely by a firm adhesion to the Divine rule, but by a generous compliance with all the ways which God has prescribed for the exercise of brotherly love. These surely are sufficient without travelling beyond them. We are to do good to the bodies and the souls of men, according to our opportunity. Christ speaks of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick. Temporal and spiritual benefits were profusely conferred by Him in all His intercourse with men. He wrought His miracles to supply their bodily wants, and He died to save their souls. Let it be remembered how, with all this before His eyes, His beloved apostle laid down the law to his followers, saying—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The Divine dealing by us is to be the model of our dealing by others. To take a single illustration, observe how the apostle enjoined the duty of a generous

contribution of their substance on the members of the Church at Corinth. It was by reminding them of what Christ had done for them, he gave them to know what he desired they would do for the necessitous for whom he pleaded. "I speak—to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." As it is in this duty, so it is in all. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

III. The next evidence of brotherly love is akin to the second, and comes now to be seasonably considered. It may be regarded indeed as a summary of the two already considered and an extension of their meaning and application. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

There is great force in the expression—"This is the love of God." This is that in which it consists, by which its existence is manifested, and without which it cannot be. The connection between the love of God and keeping His commandments is inseparable. Wherever the one is, there the other is. If the one is wanting so is the other. It is plain the apostle used the strongest terms to describe this thought which the language could furnish.

Between it and that employed by our Lord there is a close affinity. These were among His sayings, and it is observable they were all recorded by John—"If ye love me, keep my commandments"—"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"—"If a man love me he will keep my words." What a comment on the words of John—"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Such a connection is as natural as it is scriptural. In all

the relations of life, love is the impelling principle of obedience. A child obeys his parent because he loves him, and as he loves him. The same may be said of the master and servant, the king and his subjects. If there be not love, uniform and hearty obedience cannot be rendered.

In the case of Christ and His people, the claims are peculiarly strong on the one hand, and the obligations specially felt on the other. There is no love so strong as that by which they are bound to one another. It takes precedence of every other, and if rival claims are presented, they must yield to it as supreme.

The consequence is, that the love of Christ urges his people to the obedience of every commandment. No matter how trifling it may seem to be, it is enough that He has declared it to be His will. The Psalmist has beautifully expressed this idea, when he says—"As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so do our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." And hence, in another psalm, he says—"Thou wilt guide me with thine eye."

So also as there is thus a respect to every commandment, however trifling it may seem to be, there is a regard to them all. Great or small, easy or arduous, they are all owned to be binding and must be done. Love excepts none. In some sense, the more severe the service, the more determined is the compliance.

Alas! how little is such love exemplified. To many may Christ complain, "Thou art neither cold nor hot." Let us examine ourselves, and see how it is with us. And let us never forget the apostle lays it down as an essential evidence of our being governed by the love of God that we keep His commandments—using the very strongest form of expression—"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

IV. There is one other evidence in the verses before us, but it may almost be regarded as a part of that which has just been noticed. It is such an apprehension of the commandments of God that they are not considered to be a burthen. "His commandments are not grievous."

This saying is universally and absolutely true of the commandments of God in their own nature. They are all "holy, and just, and good." In every case they distinguish aright between good and evil. They always give the award of righteousness. And obedience to them invariably secures, in the end, the highest interests of those by whom they are kept. "In keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward." "Great peace have they which love thy law."

Such, however, is not the sentiment of the ungodly. They consider many of God's commandments to be grievous. They feel them to be a burthen which they cannot bear. They are a yoke that is intolerable. They esteem them precise and unreasonable. It may even be that in their demands of self-denial they are sometimes felt, if not pronounced, to be unjust. We might instance such commands as these—"Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."—"Abstain from all appearance of evil"—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; your whole spirit, and soul, and body." These are felt to be grievous by the ungodly.

Not so by the godly. They may not obey them as they would, but they approve of them, admire them, and seek after conformity to them. And we may notice how it is they are led so to view them.

The great reason is their love of God. They so love Him that they account nothing which He has commanded grievous. It is said of Jacob, "he served seven years for Rachel ; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." This is a faint emblem of the power of love in impel-

ling the godly man to feel that the divine "commandments are not grievous."

Another reason is that his heart is in the service itself. He likes it. He finds it to his taste. Prayer and holiness are agreeable to him. They are not a drudgery, but a delight. He says as David did, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in tents of sin."

He forms, moreover, the habit of obedience, and this greatly confirms his desire for it. The more he practises it, the better he finds it. So the habit of well-doing becomes to him a second nature. And sin, ever hateful, becomes still more so.

Besides, the Holy Spirit helps his infirmities, and furthers his labours. He gives growing clearness to the perception of what is right, and increased pleasure in it. He forms the mind into an acquiescence in the views of Christ, when He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

And we may add, he is animated by the prospect of a rich reward. This makes the severest service easy. "Moses, when he was come of years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Heb. xi. 24-25. The same motive is powerful still, and as it is felt, the "commandments are not grievous."

This applies to all the commandments, but especially to those that prescribe the duties due to the children of God. This is the connexion in which the apostle presents it, and as we act upon it we may say, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

LECTURE XLI.

‘ For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?—1 JOHN v. 4, 5.

CHRIST has said, “It is enough for the servant that he be as his lord.” He referred to the treatment he had received in the world, and warned his followers that they might expect its enmity. His intercessory prayer shows how deeply this subject had impressed his mind. He pleads for them, saying, “The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” He assumes that to the last, the world and the Church should be separate, different, and contrary the one to the other. The world would never cease to be an enemy against which His people would be required to contend. In this, as in all His views, His beloved apostle acquiesces. In the verse preceding the text he describes the life of the godly, saying, “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous.” In the attempt to maintain it, he knew they would be thwarted, and tempted, and opposed. Hence he delivers the counsel and warning of the text, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Two things claim our attention in these words. 1. The contest of the Christian with the world, and 2. The way in which he may obtain the victory. May the Lord enable us to wage this warfare, and make us successful in it.

I. The contest with the world. It is assumed to be universal. None can avoid it. If we follow Christ we must resist the world. His exhortation is, "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The forms in which this warfare must be maintained are many and dangerous.

There can be no doubt the apostle would have more immediately in his view the persecutions which believers were required to encounter in his day from the world. All the early Christians were familiar with them. They could not abandon their ancient faith, whether Judaism or heathenism, and embrace the gospel of Christ without incurring the displeasure of friends, the suspicion of acquaintances, and the fierce opposition of the public. The Apostle Paul tells us of himself that he had "suffered the loss of all things" for Christ—fortune, fame, friends, and riches. He calls on all others to be ready to do the same, and after reciting the trials and triumphs of the godly from the beginning, he says, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

We have cause to be thankful that we are not exposed to the trials of those times. But it does not therefore follow

that we have nothing to fear from the world. Perhaps the danger is greater now than it was then, although the suffering is less. The temptation is much increased, to suppose we can please two masters. The general profession of Christianity leads us to think we may render all it requires, without rousing the enmity of the world. But there can be no greater mistake. The opposition to vital godliness and decided holiness will never be abandoned by the men of the world. Of this, all who seek to cultivate them will soon find abundant proof. They will be suspected, misrepresented, and otherwise injured. Hence arises their danger. They may want courage to withstand this opposition. They may be tempted to evade it by acting unfaithfully. Thus, "the fear of man bringeth a snare." A fatal compromise may be made between the church and the world. The broad distinction that ought to subsist between them may be reduced to a near approximation. The barriers of separation may be taken down, and by seeking to please the world, the best interests of the soul may be seriously endangered. We need to be watchful. The command is as urgent now as it ever was, "come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

Even supposing, however, that our danger does not lie in this direction, it may still be great in another. Our circumstances may be such as not greatly to expose us to worldly fellowship. Or though exposed to it there may be little taste for it, or a firmness that defies it. Still the world may have access to us in another way. There may be an undue estimate of its value. "The deceitfulness of riches" may be practised upon us. It is easy to conceive of a religious professor withstanding the allurements to worldly fellowship, and taking no little credit for self-denial in so doing, while in reality it is only the absorption of this disposition in another equally bad, if not worse. Covetousness may be the cause of our seclu-

sion. The love of money may eat as a canker into the soul. It may tempt to practices of very doubtful propriety. It may harden the heart against the claims of others. One thing is clear, that all the sacred writers denounce it with extreme severity. One says, "go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." And another writes, "the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Nor does the danger end here. It is altogether another form of worldliness which the Apostle John contemplates when he says, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world, and the world passeth away, and the fashion of it." The vanity of this life is his theme. And this may present its temptations in many forms. To one it comes in the solicitations of fleshly appetites, which are hard to be resisted, for they are a part of our very nature. To another they address themselves in the garb of pleasantries, and unseasonable and frivolous entertainments, utterly beneath the dignity and aim of a Christian. And to not a few they offer the bribe of distinction and honour, and power and influence. Each is beset in accordance with his peculiar propensity. But whatever the form may be, none can escape from the danger of the temptation.

The consequence is, that to a large class the world proves a fatal enemy. They are of the world. They live for it and die to it. They are its slaves. Little as they may have obtained in it, they still cleave to it. They hold it with a deadly grasp. Even when they desire to free themselves from it, they find it cannot be done. It has got a hold of them, which it will not relax. And the warning of Jesus has

proved to be to them in vain—"what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Even the enlightened and godly man finds the extreme danger of this subtle enemy. It is a principal hindrance to his growth in grace. It sadly mars his peace. Remember Lot and his wife, and Jacob, and the whole class of whose type the apostle says, "Demetrius hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." It can be withstood only by a most determined resistance. A contest must be maintained with it that allows of no compromise. It must be overcome.

II. Let us then inquire, in the second place, how this victory may be gained. Blessed be God, a way is pointed out in the text. It is both full and explicit. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

The text is all of victory. Thrice it has "overcometh." It assumes a victory. And our concern is to ascertain how it may be secured.

Two things are mentioned as essential to it, and they are represented to be effectual—regeneration and faith. Let us consider them separately, as the apostle describes them.

1. Regeneration. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

There is great force in the term "whatsoever." It refers to the work of the Spirit in the soul. So far as that prevails there is a power and principle in direct antagonism to the world. Were there no other nature than that which is produced in the new birth, there would be no entrance for the world into the soul. But the "old man" remains with the

“new man.” The former invites the world, while the latter resists it. Hence the continual controversy within it. And so far as the new man prevails, it overcometh the world.

Nothing else can do it. Education may do much. It keeps from evil habits, and leads to the esteem of what is good. But while it may shut the world out at one avenue, it leaves another open by which it may enter. Prudence may do much also. It can reckon the consequences of complying with worldly desires or refusing them. It can discern the advantages of the one, and the evils of the other; but here, as before, while much present benefit is gained, the world has the mastery under a new form. No withdrawal from the world even will secure against it. We may leave it, but it can follow us into the most private retirement. The convent wall is no barrier to keep it out. The most worldly spirit may prevail amid the gloom, and austerity, and self-inflicted tortures of the cloister. Asceticism is not spiritual mindedness. The one is of the flesh, the other is heavenly. The one is human, the other is divine. The one irritates, the other sanctifies. The one is of the world, the other is of God. “The kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” It is “not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” We may add, that no sufferings endured in the world will overcome it. They may make us tired of it, and long to be delivered from it. But let them be removed, and, if there be no higher power, the love of the world will spring up again in the heart and usurp the place it possessed of old.

Nothing will overcome the world but a new birth, and that will do it. This is asserted in the text by John, “whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” It must and it does. Paul reiterates the same sentiment, when he says, “be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renew-

ing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God." He takes for granted that unless there be this transformation of mind there will be conformity to the world, but that such transformation will overcome it. How it does so may easily be shown.

The mind is then enlightened. It sees the world in its true character. The inscription upon it becomes distinctly legible, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

The conscience is quickened. The warning is heard with deep feeling, "no man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon." There is the utmost jealousy lest the world should obtain the place of God.

The heart is purified. Thus the taste is rendered pure and heavenly. The world, therefore, cannot please nor satisfy. Nothing will do for the renewed soul but God. "It follows hard after him," and cries, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth whom I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh doth fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

Here, therefore, is the provision which God has made to overcome the world, and it is worthy of him—"whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." The truly converted man and he only will have dominion over it.

Still, this is not the only provision. The new birth is essential as a foundation. But God has brought another principle into exercise by which the new man puts forth its energies, and this principle we now proceed, in the next place, to consider—

2. It is faith, and the apostle says of it, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

He presents the subject in the strongest possible form. He challenges us to give an example of the conquest of the world, in any man, except by faith. He assumes that otherwise it cannot be. And he affirms that thus it may and must be. It will be our part now to show how faith secures such a blessed issue.

First, then, it does so by engaging the attention with Jesus Christ. This is prominent in the verses before us. "He believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." His mind becomes thus occupied with the high themes of the person and work of Christ. In comparison with them, all other things fall into insignificance in his esteem. He sees himself in such a lost, perishing condition, that nothing short of an Almighty Saviour can deliver him. That Almighty Saviour he beholds provided by the wondrous grace and wisdom of Jehovah. He sees Him in the Son of God. He knows that He "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." In his work and offices there is everything that he can either desire or need. He expresses his views and feelings in the language of David, saying, "this is all my salvation, and all my desire." He thus becomes a man of one idea. But it is the most elevated that can occupy the human mind. His mind is absorbed with it. Everything is subordinated to it. All things are seen in the light of it. What will the world be in the eyes of such a man? He does not despise it. He can estimate it according to its real value. But in comparison with Christ and His salvation it is nothing. Thus by the very force of his new nature he rises above it. And nothing can be more just or natural than the sentiment of the apostle, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Again, the believer is much strengthened in these elevated views by observing that one design of Christ's salvation is to secure a victory over the present world. He hears the saluta-

tion from an inspired apostle, "grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sin, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Such words are well fitted to exercise a powerful influence over him. The more he reflects upon them, he is the more impressed by them. They are fully confirmed by his own experience. He finds there is extreme danger to be encountered in the world. Its spirit is entirely contrary to the mind of Christ. Its atmosphere is most uncongenial to the growth of godliness. Its snares are laid on every hand, and the utmost circumspection is needed to avoid them. He is specially impressed by finding the place which this subject occupies in the mind of the great intercessor, as appears from His last prayer on behalf of His people, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." He feels his own weakness, and is reminded he must wait continually upon God. He does so, and thus, with a watchful eye upon the world, "this is the victory by which he overcomes it, even his faith."

Farther, he is encouraged while he is warned, by considering the example of Christ and of those who have been conformed to Him. They conquered, and so may he. He hears Christ saying, "these things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." His victory would be theirs. He conquered for them, and He would conquer in them. Hence one of His servants could say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto me." In the sight of that cross the world lost its attractions. What is pleasure? What is honour? What are riches, when viewed under the shadow of the cross? Nothing. They lose their power over us. It

is not necessary they should be flung away, as useless or worthless. But as to their having a preference in our esteem, so that for their sake we would dishonour Christ or imperil our salvation, we are impelled to say, let them perish. "One thing is needful." "Christ is all and in all."

Finally, his faith carries him into close and constant intercourse with eternity, and thus a mighty influence is brought to bear upon him, and deaden his attachments to the present world. It is of the very nature of faith to unveil the eternal world. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Particularly it brings him into contact with Christ in His everlasting kingdom. He knows He is "gone to prepare a place for him, and that he will come again to receive him to himself, that where he is there his servant may also be." No wonder, therefore, he should say, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. v. 1-4. It is natural that he should add, "we walk by faith not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—ver. 7-10. How just the conclusion from such views and exercises—"this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

By these means the world may be overcome, but by them

only. In no other way can man rise superior to it. The annals of the world do not furnish an example of a triumph over it, gained otherwise. But they are full of such triumphs. Read the 11th chapter to the Hebrews and be convinced. "The time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae ; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions ; quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised, to life again : and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; that they might obtain a better resurrection ; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment ; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. (Of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth—These all obtained a good report through faith." We may well therefore ask with the apostle, "who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

LECTURE XLII.

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."—

1 JOHN v. 6.

IT is the Apostle John, the author of this epistle, who thus records a circumstance that occurred during the crucifixion of our Lord—"One of the soldiers, with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." It has been supposed there is a reference to this incident in the verse now before us, and that the apostle suggests in it an illustration of the design of Christ's mission. The water and the blood are thus supposed to be suggestive of the two great blessings of redemption, purity and pardon, or as they are more technically expressed, sanctification and justification. The water is held to be illustrative of the former, and the blood of the latter. This interpretation is fanciful and therefore not likely to be the correct one. Such expositions are to be avoided. There is a much more natural meaning in the fact recorded by the evangelist. The soldier was not quite certain that Christ was dead. To make sure work of it he thrust his spear into the Saviour's side. The stream of blood and water that followed proved the reality of His death. Thus by the violent act of a rude soldier the great fact of our Lord's death was abundantly confirmed. And this, we doubt not, was the

reason why the incident was put on record. In the text itself indeed there is an expression, which is fatal to the fanciful interpretation that has been noticed. It is the phrase, "this is he that *came* by water and blood." How did Christ come thus? This is the question to be determined by the interpreter. The history of our Lord furnishes the answer. He came by water, when He was baptized with it, and by blood when He poured it out on the cross. And this view is confirmed by the additional circumstance in the text—"it is the Spirit that beareth witness." For it shows that the subject in the apostle's mind is the testimony borne to Christ, and this, he states is threefold, His baptism, His death, and the Holy Spirit. Let us then consider these testimonies.

I. "This is he that came by water."

The account of our Lord's baptism is in the 3d chapter of the gospel by Matthew at the 13th verse, and is deserving of special attention. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The narrative is most instructive, and we shall notice its principal features.

Observe, then, our Lord came from Galilee to Jordan, a lengthened journey, for the purpose of being baptized. This shows the importance of the ordinance. In it Christ was to be set apart to His great work, in the duties of His public

ministry. It was this that invested the ordinance with such moment, and nothing in itself merely.

It was to John our Lord came that He might be baptized. It was the peculiarity and honour of his office that he should administer the ordinance to the Saviour. For this purpose his ministry had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah 700 years before his birth—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." For this purpose he was born, under remarkable circumstances, at the fitting time. For this purpose he was trained in the wilderness by a life of austerity and seclusion. On this account he is declared to be "a prophet, and more than a prophet." It is said, "among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." All this pointed, not to himself personally, so much as to the high office he was to discharge. And that office derived all its glory from the greatness of the person and his work, who was to be baptized by him who executed it.

When John and Christ met, the conversation that arose is full of interest and instruction. John hesitated to baptize Him. He did so out of the deep sense he had of his own unworthiness, and the exalted views which he entertained of his Lord. How natural! But Jesus directed him—"Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was necessary he should administer the ordinance that prophecy might be fulfilled, that the whole law in that case might be observed, and that the Saviour might enter on His great work publicly and solemnly, as became both Him and it. So John was satisfied, and baptized Him.

Far more important, however, were the events that occurred as He was baptized. These deserve special attention. They present an exhibition of the Godhead in the great work of redemption well deserving of consideration.

The Son presented himself to undertake the work. For this He had been born of a virgin. For this He had been trained in the secluded home of His earthly parent. This He should now publicly undertake, having accomplished the years which the law required to perfect His manhood and make Him ripe for the priesthood.

The Spirit descended upon Him visibly, when He was baptized, as a dove. This emblem was chosen as the fitting one for both the Spirit and the Saviour. How significant of the Spirit whose character and work are both signalized by peace. And how emblematic of Christ, of whom it is written, "He is our peace."

The Father was manifested to. "Lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was recognized as the Son of God, in all the dignity of His glorious person. And He was pronounced to be most acceptable as well because of the work which He had undertaken as His own essential excellence.

These were the circumstances of our Lord's baptism. They furnish a comment on the text truly illustrative of its meaning, and confirmatory of its importance. Herein we see the force of the announcement—"This is he that came by water." He came openly and publicly to undertake the work of redemption. He was set apart solemnly to that high enterprise by a special ministry of heaven, and in an established ordinance of the law. While it was administered, the God-head was committed to the work of salvation. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost were all exhibited, deeply concerned, and bearing their part in it. Thus Jesus "came by water."

No wonder, therefore, that we find him referring to this passage in his history, as one of deepest moment to him and all mankind, and associating it with the design of his whole ministry. As soon as His baptism was ended, and the fearful

temptation that followed it in the wilderness was successfully concluded, we are informed, "he returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," whence He had gone for the purpose of being baptized. Arrived at "Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went into the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" the Scriptures. The passage, either chosen by Himself, or that came in order for the day, was exactly fitted to the occasion. It was from the prophecy of Isaiah. And only think how our Lord must have read it with all the circumstances of His recent baptism fresh in His memory and warm in His heart—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives; and the recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." At once He applied it to Himself and His mission. "This day, said he, is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." That day He set out publicly on His holy career. From that hour He would be devoted to the one great work which the Father had given Him to do. He was committed to it before God and angels and men. And this, I apprehend, was the sentiment in the apostle's mind, when he said, "This is he that came by water."

II. "This is he that came by blood—not by water only, but by water and blood."

The manner in which this announcement is made, is well fitted to impress us with its importance. The blood is noticed with peculiar emphasis. Important as it was, that Christ "came by water," it was still more so that "he came by blood." By the one He undertook the work, but by the other He executed it. The one was the beginning of His public enterprise, the other its successful termination. The wise man has said, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

And never had this saying a more glorious application than that which can be made of it to the work of Christ. Among men many an enterprise begins well, but ends in disaster. Others begin and end alike in evil. But Jesus began well and ended better. Through His whole course He could say, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."—"My meat is to do the will of my Father which is in heaven."—"I must be about my Father's business."—"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."—"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Thus He "came not by water only, but by water and blood"—by water truly, but by blood eminently. Let us then inquire into the full meaning of this "coming by blood."

1. Christ came by blood that the prophecies might be fulfilled. The very first announcement of a Saviour proclaimed Him as a sufferer. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In a more advanced period it was foretold that He should suffer death. "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." The very manner of His death was declared. "They pierced my hands and my feet." It is observable that with these plain prophecies before them, the Jews expected only a triumphant conqueror in their Messiah. They were right in looking for His triumph, but they overlooked the way in which He would accomplish it. But a watchful providence secured the exact fulfilment of every prophecy. By a train of most singular providences Christ was crucified. Nothing but the guidance of a divine hand could have conducted to an issue so completely in accordance with ancient predictions. We can now look back upon it with thankfulness and triumph. We see the completion of the divine purpose. Our faith is confirmed, and our hope is

established, while we contemplate the great fact that Jesus came "not by water only, but by water and blood."

2. Christ came by blood, and so accomplished the design of the ancient law. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Mosaic economy was a ceremony of which Christ was the soul and substance. Its institutions were particularly designed to prepare the world for His death. "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the Testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." This was the great lesson of the whole economy—"without shedding of blood there is no remission." It was in accordance with the spirit and design of such a dispensation Jesus entered upon His ministry. To Him all the ceremonies pointed. In Him they were to have their completion. Their meaning must be illustrated, and their purpose served in Him. But how otherwise could these ends be answered than by His death? We are thus at once carried into the spirit of the apostle's doctrine, and led to receive the truth with joyfulness—"This is he that came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood."

3. When Christ came by blood He secured all the blessings of redemption for His people. What a wondrous passage is the following!—"If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to

serve the living God? And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise, it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Here are two great thoughts, that the death of Christ was essential, and that when it did take place it was effectual. It secured all the blessings that constitute an eternal inheritance. By it we have the pardon of sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." By it we have purity. It "purges the conscience from dead works." He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we are healed." By Him we have peace. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Greater efficacy it would be impossible to attribute to the blessed truth, that Jesus "came by blood."

4. It need only be added, when He came by blood He opened up a way of access for the sinner to God and to glory. We may now congratulate and encourage one another in the language of the apostle—"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say his flesh; and having an high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." There is no blessing needful for us that we may not have here when thus sought, and no amount of glory which we may not hope

to enjoy hereafter. We may adopt the language of the psalmist, and say, as we gaze by faith on the shed blood of the Saviour—"The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." All this we owe to Him of whom it is testified that He "came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood."

III. It only remains to consider the confirmation of the Spirit's testimony, "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

The witness of the Spirit was borne to Christ during the whole period of His ministry. He bore witness to him when He came by water, publicly acknowledging Him in His baptism. He bore witness to Him again when He came by blood, sustaining Him in the hour of His agony and death, and constraining others to own Him even amid His sufferings. The thief on the cross prayed to Him—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And the centurion who superintended the crucifixion exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." Many, too, even of the heedless multitude, "Beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." But the witness of which the text speaks points to that which was borne by the Spirit after the death of Christ. There is an historical order observed by the apostle. There was a testimony to Him in His public baptism, when He came by water. There was also a testimony to Him in His death when He came by blood. But subsequently to both the Spirit continued to bear testimony, and it is to this witness-bearing we now direct our attention.

It began with His resurrection. He was "quickened by the Spirit" on the third, the appointed day. And O! what a glorious testimony was borne to him then? "He spoiled

principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead."

This testimony was continued in His ascension. During His sojourn of forty days on earth, subsequent to his resurrection, Jesus spoke much of the Spirit to His disciples. He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem until they should be endowed with power from on high, assuring them they "should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Having so prepared them for his departure, He ascended visibly to heaven, leaving them to say, "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

Then, in due time, was the Spirit poured out from on high. On the day of Pentecost He came in "a rushing mighty wind, and in cloven tongues like as of fire." By the transactions of that day the triumphs of the Saviour were manifested to all. The apostles boldly appealed to them and said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear—therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Nor did the Spirit then cease His testimony. He continued and increased it in the ministry of the apostles. "After the Lord had spoken unto them He was received up into heaven, and set on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following."

There is peculiar significance in the reason assigned in the text for the Spirit's testimony. "It is the Spirit that

beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." As a spirit of truth he could not but testify to Christ. The truth required it at his hands. Jesus deserved it, and man needed it, and the Spirit did it.

How blessed are these views! Jesus provided all the sinner needed. And the testimony to Him and His work may well satisfy every mind.

How solemn then is our duty, and how heavy our responsibility! We cannot be better reminded of them than in the language of Paul, with which we conclude, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Heb. ii. 3, 4.

LECTURE XLIII.

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”—
1 JOHN v. 7.

DOUBTS have long been entertained respecting the authenticity of this verse. It is wanting in many of the early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. And we must wait for farther light, before we rest in its inspiration.

As to the doctrine, however, taught in the verse before us, commonly known by the name of the Trinity, and representing that there are three persons in the unity of the Godhead, there is a mass of scripture evidence to sustain it, which we do not see how any one receiving the Scriptures as the Word of God can reasonably withstand. Although therefore we shall not at present find any argument upon this verse, we yet deem it a fitting occasion to lay before you a brief outline of the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Here, however, we are met at the outset with an objection which, before going further, it is proper to notice. It is said by some who do not receive this doctrine, that it appears to them to involve an impossibility. They do not see, they tell us, how it can be said of any being, that there is a sense in which he can be said to be three, and a sense in which he is at the same time one. In reply it may be remarked that we are wholly incompetent to speculate on the subject of the Godhead. It does not become us to say what

is possible or impossible. There cannot, we admit, be a contradiction in the nature of the Godhead. But there is no contradiction in our view of the Trinity. We can point in nature to such a plurality, where yet there is unity. We need not go beyond man himself. He is three, and yet one. The prayer of the apostle for the Thessalonians is that they may be sanctified wholly "in soul, and body, and spirit." There is in man a body, visible to the eye; a spirit which animates that body, and which he possesses in common with the inferior creation; and a soul superadded, rational, accountable, and immortal. There is therefore a trinity in the unity of manhood. There is no contradiction in its nature. It cannot be said with reason that the two ideas are incompatible. The fact of man's nature is a plain contradiction to such a statement. And therefore the whole subject of the Trinity becomes a simple question of evidence. Is it taught in the divine word, or is it not?

The question is one of pure revelation. It is a subject on which we can have no knowledge, save as we are taught of God. It is essential that we investigate it in this spirit. We should come to the Scriptures, resolved to have our judgment determined entirely by their testimony. Let us say now, "this will we do," by the divine blessing. We come as learners to the sacred page, and our investigation is what is written upon it?

The best form in which we can arrive at a satisfactory conclusion is the historical. We shall take the Scriptures, and trace the growing light that emanates from them on this subject. For on it, as every other, we are laid under the necessity of "searching the Scriptures." God saw the exercise was good for man. He does not fully unfold any great truth in one place. It is announced in many places, with different measures of clearness, and in various connexions. Rightly to understand it, all these must be consulted and studied.

And it is when they are brought together and considered in harmony, that we may hope to have just views of the great truth which they all conspire to reveal. Thus, therefore let us now proceed in our inquiry into the doctrine of the Trinity.

1. First, then, no sooner do we open the sacred volume than our attention is arrested by a peculiarity in the revelation of God which demands consideration. In the 1st chapter of Genesis at the 26th verse we find the account of man's creation in these words, "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The same form of expression is common. The divine being, the great Creator, is spoken of in the plural number. A thoughtful reader cannot pass by this fact without reflection. It does not contain within it its own explanation. But it produces a condition of mind that puts us on farther inquiry. We have ascertained a fact, which seems to cover some truth that is not yet developed, and we are set upon the watch to discover what that may be. It may turn out that nothing special was indicated by the peculiar expression ; or it may prove to be the first streak of light that shall grow clearer and clearer.

2. Proceeding in this spirit we soon arrive at another mode of expression that is somewhat similar to the former, but a little more definite. Out of many examples 'one may be selected in Numbers vi. 22-27. It is the benediction to be pronounced on ancient Israel. The Lord spake unto Moses saying, speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, the Lord bless thee, and keep thee ; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee ; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." There is much deserving notice here. The occasion was one of extreme importance. It was when a solemn blessing was to be pronounced on the chosen people

of God. It was not merely an occasional service, but one designed to be perpetual. A divine form was therefore prescribed. The very words in which it should be expressed were put into the mouth of the priest. But the words themselves were deeply significant. Why the repetition of the blessing? Why the threefold recognition of Jehovah? And then, after it is pronounced, how are we to understand the explanation, "they shall put my name upon them, and I will bless them." Let us try and enter into the views and feelings of the inquirer, who is supposed to be groping his way in much darkness after the truth, of which he has seen some faint glimmering. He has seen that God is habitually spoken of in the plural form. He now finds a more pointed repetition of this peculiarity in the reiteration of His incommunicable name of Jehovah. And then this plurality is said to constitute the name of God, and the singular form is adopted, "I will bless them." A thoughtful student of the word could not fail to be deeply impressed by such peculiarities as these. He would not see their full meaning, but he would be stimulated to the utmost anxiety to discover it more fully. The impression would be made upon his mind, that in some way there was a plurality in the Godhead. From the Aaronic benediction it would seem to be a Trinity. And yet he would not fail to discover that whether he were right or wrong in these apprehensions, the utmost carefulness was manifested to guard the doctrine of the divine unity, and to make it so clear, that whatever the explanation of the plurality or trinity might be, the unity was indisputable.

3. Supposing the inquirer to proceed with his investigation, let us next contemplate him passing from this formula of the Jewish Church to those of the Christian. Here he finds two that are very marked and distinct. The one is the formula of admission into the Christian church by baptism,

and the other is the Apostolical benediction. We may notice them separately.

The former will be found in Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." This makes all plain. Here is a plurality in the object of worship. That plurality is represented to be a trinity. That trinity is stated to consist of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the Son is especially noticed as divine, lest His humanity should be esteemed to be incompatible with such a claim. He demands universal obedience. "Observe all things whatsoever I have commanded." And He assumes His own omnipresence and infinite sufficiency for the salvation of all. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." How is this formula to be interpreted? It is an act of worship. That worship is rendered equally to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Worship cannot be offered acceptably to any being save God. It implies the ascription of divine honours and perfections. The conclusion is unavoidable. We are taught to worship the Father as God, we are taught to worship the Son as God, and we are taught to worship the Holy Ghost as God. Yet observe the testimony to the unity of the Godhead. For the ordinances are administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the one common name, expressive of the one only object of religious worship. The doctrine of the Trinity in the unity of the Godhead could not be more clearly or impressively taught than is here done by implication.

The next formula, containing the apostolical benediction, is in 2 Cor. xiii. 14, and is as follows, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion

of the Holy Ghost, be with you." This also is an act of worship, and it is addressed alike to each person in the Godhead. A most solemn prayer is offered to each, and the answer could be obtained only on the supposition of divine perfections. The whole Church, and every member of it, supplicates grace from Christ. If He is able to hear and answer such prayers, what must He be? He must be infinite in knowledge, and power, and love. The love of God is sought in terms not more comprehensive or expressive of divinity. And the same may be said of the communion of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Trinity is again assumed in this benediction.

Now let me ask you to think what must be the state of a conscientious mind habitually using the terms of these two formulas, and yet not receiving the doctrine of the Trinity? Must there not be, every time they are repeated, a painful endeavour to evade their plain meaning? Must there not be a feeling of dissatisfaction, and a desire that they had been differently expressed? And if so, is there not a tendency in such an exercise to harden the heart and blind the understanding? On the other hand, let the doctrine in question be admitted, and the repetition of these formulas is felt to be a confirmation of great truths. There is the utmost satisfaction with these words, because there is a hearty reception of the truths which they teach.

Nor ought we to omit noticing the singular arrangement by which it has pleased God to secure the constant inculcation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that His people shall be kept under the power of it. Every time a member is admitted into the church it is repeated. And every time the church is assembled and dismissed, it is sent away under the impression of it. It is the will of God that His people should live in the full conviction of it, and under the power of its influence, entering the membership of the

church with its acceptance, and living in it with its constant profession.

4. We can now only indicate another line of argument that might be pursued to great length and with unanswerable demonstration. It is the ascription of deity to each person of the Godhead throughout the sacred volume. The Father is declared to be God, so also is the Son, and in like manner the Spirit. Yet there is only one God. The most brief notice of the proof in each case must suffice.

The Father is declared to be God. Deity is expressly ascribed to Him. "To us there is one God, the Father." Perfections are attributed to Him which can attach only to a divine being. Moses says, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Worship is rendered to Him. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." And works are ascribed to Him which God only could perform. "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" Such proof that the Father is God is irresistible. Brief as it is, if it is not allowed to be satisfactory it is plain the doctrine could not be proved at all. There is no other way in which it could be shown that it is taught in the Scriptures. But no one will hesitate to own that it is sufficient, and that the doctrine is taught there beyond contradiction.

With this admission, then, let us look next at the proof that the Son is God. We ask, and we find the same as before. Whatever is found to prove that the Father is God, may be shown to be taught respecting the Son. He is expressly called God. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Divine perfections are ascribed to Him. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This

is the true God, and eternal life." Divine worship is rendered to Him. "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." And divine works are attributed to Him. It is of Him it is written, "by him were all things created, that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." If these arguments fail to prove that the Son is God, they must also fail to prove that the Father is God, and so the deity of neither can be proved.

The same observation applies in the case of the Spirit. The Scriptures offer the same and no other proof of His deity. He is called God. When Peter spoke to Ananias and Sapphira he said, "how is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Holy Ghost? ye have not lied unto men, but to God." The perfections of God are said to be His, as when He is called the "Eternal Spirit." He is worshipped, as when the prayer is offered to Him, "come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain." And He has creation assigned to Him, as when it is written, "the Spirit moved on the face of the waters"—the "Spirit garnished the heavens."

It is unnecessary to pursue the argument farther. If the Scriptures are to be understood in their plain and unsophisticated meaning, they teach that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God. Yet it need not be said how constant and explicit they are in asserting the unity of God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men." There is therefore a sense in which God is three, and yet one. As in man, the image of God, His chief type on earth, there is a threefold nature in one person, so would it seem to be with the Godhead. The fact is revealed in the latter case, as it is manifestly exhibited to us in the

former. For its full comprehension we must wait for the time when "we shall see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face, and when we shall know even as also we are known."

5. There is only one other observation which it seems important to make on this high theme. It is that we should be careful to regard the doctrine of the Trinity, not as a mere theological dogma, to be proved by an unanswerable train of reasoning, but rather as a great scriptural and spiritual discovery, deeply involving our highest interests, and admitting of the most extensive and practical application. It is ever so presented in the Scriptures. Thus we have seen it in man's creation, when a council was held upon His character and position. Thus also in the Aaronic benediction when the triune Jehovah blessed the people. Thus in the baptismal form, and the apostolical benediction, when the largest blessings were sought and conferred. And these are only examples of the habitual style of the Scriptures. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and was, and is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called; mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied." We are taught that the persons of the Godhead counselled the redemption of sinners. We see them severally revealed in the accomplishment of the way of salvation. We know that to them is entrusted the effectual application of it to the sinner. And we are assured that it is thus rendered secure. The doctrine is therefore eminently practical, and we cannot better conclude our notice of it than by adverting to the duties which it lays upon us.

We are thus required to have confidence in God. All this is revealed that we may be won back to allegiance and love.

Let us so know God as to say, "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

We are thus greatly encouraged to serve Him. If it be really so that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost so conspire to save us, what are the obligations under which we are laid? "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Then shall we not say, "we love him, because he first loved us," and "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another?"

We are thus left inexcusable if we are not saved. "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

How holy and happy we might be if we only lived up to our privileges! If the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us, if the love of God be shed abroad in us, and if we enjoy the communion of the Holy Ghost, what more could we have, or desire to have?

LECTURE XLIV.

“ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood : and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater ; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.”—1 JOHN v. 8, 9.

THE sentiment of these verses is similar to that in the 6th verse—“ This is he that came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” In both there is mention of the threefold testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit. The importance of the subject would justify this repetition, but there seems also to be a difference between the two passages. In the first, the testimony is borne to Christ personally. He is proved to have been the Messiah, the promised Saviour, by His baptism and the events which accompanied it, by His death and its accordance with ancient prophecy, as well as with the great ends to be accomplished by it, and by the Spirit who was poured out in remarkable gifts and graces on those who received and proclaimed Him. In the second passage now to be considered, the testimony is borne not merely to Christ personally, but to the truth of which He was the subject and substance. The former was fitted to the time and served the present purpose, but the latter remains to this hour. It is the standing, un-

changing testimony to the gospel of the grace of God, to Jesus Christ as "the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation." So understanding it, we shall consider the threefold testimony in the order of the text—the Spirit, the water, and the blood, concluding with the practical remark of the 9th verse, designed to enforce the reception of this clear, satisfactory, and divine testimony. God grant that we may both understand it and obey it.

I. The Spirit bears witness. The Holy Ghost is meant. And our inquiry is, what is the permanent testimony which He bears to Christ and His gospel?

His grand, enduring, and most certain testimony is that which is borne in His written word. The Scriptures are His witness to Christ. So said Christ himself when He enjoined the study of them, saying, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." They are expressly ascribed to the Spirit. They are His special work. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

It would be impossible to overrate the value of this testimony. It is a written word, and therefore not liable to change. How different it is from the uncertain voice of tradition? Two men will not state the same truth in precisely the same way. Even the same man will not present the same sentiment a second time exactly as he did before. But the written record remains. It does not change. Not only so. We can study it in a way altogether different from the attention which we can give to a spoken discourse. We can carry it with us, whither we go. We can consider it again and again. We can refresh our memory with it as often as we need it. We can bring fresh appliances to the discovery of its meaning. We can live upon it in devout and

constant meditation. We can say with the psalmist, "O! how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day."

Not only, however, did the Scriptures proceed from the Spirit at the first, but they have been preserved by Him in a most remarkable manner. He has caused the most scrupulous care to maintain their purity. It is well known how faithful the Jews were to their sacred trust, to whom were first "committed the oracles of God." They reckoned not only the books, but the verses and letters of which they were composed. Our Lord never blamed them for the corruption of the sacred text, however they may have perverted its doctrines. They had the high honour of having the Scriptures, as they existed in their day, sanctioned by Him. As for the New Testament, its integrity has been preserved in a different way. It presents a singular example of the evil of men being overruled for good. The early church was soon torn by divisions and distractions. In all the controversies that agitated it, the appeal of all was to the written word. It was therefore read and studied with the utmost industry and perseverance. No one could alter or misrepresent it without exposing himself to immediate detection. God has thus made the wrath of man to praise him. The jealousies of the early and numerous sects proved to be the safeguard of the Scriptures, and so they have come down to our day unmutated and uncorrupted.

Nor does the testimony of the Spirit cease in the publication and preservation of the Scriptures. He continues to enlighten men in the knowledge of them, to inpress their hearts by the belief of them, and to bring them under their power. The mere letter of the word will not save the soul. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned." It is still with men as it was with the Jews, when the "vail was upon their hearts in the reading of the Old Testament." We need to

study the Scriptures as David did, when he prayed—"Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." It is as this prayer is heard the testimony of the Spirit in the word is rendered effectual. It is then as if a flood of light was let in upon the mind, and the student exclaims—"Whereas I was blind, now I see." It is as if the full tide of divine love for the first time flowed into the heart. "The love of God is shed abroad there by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." It is as if strength had been received from on high to break off the restraints of sin, to withstand temptation, and to enter upon a new course of holy and devoted obedience. These exercises are the constant results of a divine influence accompanying the study of the word. As often as they are repeated they are a renewal of the testimony of the Spirit to Christ. They begin in the conversion of the soul, and they are continued in all the advances of edification. They make the student of the Scriptures "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

But how are we to speak of the testimony itself which is thus borne by the Spirit to Christ? Then, truly, the words are verified, "he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." He gives the soul views of Christ such as it never entertained before, the most honourable to Him and assuring to it. He produces affections towards him such as never existed before, the most ardent and self-denying. He causes unreserved submission to His will, so that it is either borne with patience or done with diligence. His person, and work, and offices, and example, and promises are contemplated with adoration and thanksgiving. The enlightened renewed soul is constrained to say, "he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be

found in him." In this view the testimony of the Spirit to Christ never ceases, but continues while the Scriptures endure, as well as the exercises to which they lead.

II. The water bears witness to Christ. What are we to understand by this water? And what is its testimony?

As to the first question, there is only one use of water in the Christian economy. This is in the administration of baptism. We are therefore shut up to understand the water of the text of that ordinance. And we are confirmed in this interpretation by observing that the baptism of our Lord is spoken of under the phrase that He "came by water."

But the fact that an ordinance is made to be a witness to Christ is not to be passed unnoticed. It resembles the scriptures in being permanent, but it possesses a feature peculiar to itself. It is a testimony to the eye, and by it, to the understanding and heart. In this arrangement our Lord has graciously consulted our mental constitution. We both clearly perceive and powerfully feel whatever is presented to the eye. The sight of sorrow comes to us with unusual force. It is totally different from the hearing of it. We may be indifferent to the latter, but we cannot resist the former. This, therefore, is the nature of the testimony which has been provided in the ordinances of the New Testament. And with this apprehension of its wisdom and grace, let us now inquire what is the amount of the testimony borne by the water of baptism?

It is very simple, yet very extensive. In this ordinance we behold reflected, as in a mirror, the gospel of Christ. We cannot consider it, with attention, without recognising the fundamental doctrines of which it consists.

It is a standing testimony to the depravity of the sinner. If we come to it at all, it is because we are defiled. The observance of the ordinance is an admission that we need to

be cleansed. But it is one to which all are supposed to come. The infant is borne to it. The mature come to it. All need it, and all who bear the Christian name, with a single exception, observe it. In so doing their language virtually is—we have sinned—"I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"—"Behold, I am vile." The doctrine of original sin, and of universal depravity is involved in the very nature of the ordinance, and the emblem that constitutes it.

At the same time the efficacy of cleansing is no less clearly signified. The water that reminds us of our depravity is also a memorial of the blood of Christ. His atonement is expressed to the eye of faith. It proclaims, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin"—"Ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without spot or blemish." It says, here is a fountain and every one that washes in it is made clean.

Thus in baptism we behold the remission of sin. We read inscribed upon its laver, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." We are reminded that it is secured in a way alike honourable to God and safe for the sinner, seeing it is through the blood of His own Son. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Nor is it the pardon of sin only that is figured in baptism. We are at the same time reminded of the destruction of its power. A great moral change is made to pass upon the soul that is pardoned. Pardon is received by faith, but this grace is ever accompanied by regeneration. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but

of God." To the connexion between this blessing and baptism, that is, to the latter as the sign of the former, there is a constant reference in the studied language of the Scriptures. "We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"—"He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

In virtue of this change, a new doctrine is represented in baptism. It is the adoption of the sinner into the family of God. He then professedly passes out of the world into the church. And it is interesting to notice how the language descriptive of this gracious translation is drawn from the ordinance of which we are speaking. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." True, the reality may be very different, but such is the profession.

Thus the ordinance is significant of the work of the Spirit, as well as of that of Christ. In both the water and the use that is made of it, that is presented to our faith. As water cleanses, refreshes, and fertilizes, so does He morally and spiritually. And as water is applied to the person baptized, so is it the office of the Spirit to apply the blood of cleansing to the soul. By it He "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

Indeed, there is an express testimony to all the persons of the Godhead. They are presented separately and unitedly. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." They are three in one sense, and one in another. The high doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead is exhibited before us. Nor is it merely as a mysterious dogma, to be owned with reverence, but a gracious truth to be received with thankfulness. For

they are represented, as each and all concurring and acting in the salvation of the sinner.

Nor must we omit to add that there is a meaning in the observance of the rite. We thereby own the truth contained in it. It is a public profession of the doctrines that are taught, and of the duties that are required. It is a recognition of "the obedience of faith." Not merely is there a public testimony to the faith of the gospel, but an engagement of submission to it. It is an undertaking to renounce this world and its wicked ways, and to walk in the paths of purity and peace.

What then is baptism but the gospel under a figure? In this simple ordinance there is a standing testimony to its nature, truth, and obligations. So long as it endures, Christ is not left without a witness. We may say with the apostle, "that which we have seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life, declare we unto you." The water is a witness unto Christ.

III. So also is the blood. How is it to be understood?

The right interpretation is to be found, we apprehend, in the words of Christ. When He appointed the Supper, He said, "this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The reference appears to be to the Lord's Supper, as a lively representation of the death of Christ. This is in harmony with our view of baptism, as indicated by the water. The principle of interpretation is in both instances the same. A standing ordinance is made a permanent and visible testimony to Christ. We have seen how full and clear it is in the one, and we shall now find it not less so in the other. Yet there is a variety. Some doctrines are more fully brought out in the one than in the other. No doubt this was ordered with design. Our gracious prophet has done all things well.

Baptism is precisely that ordinance which it ought to be, as the introduction to the church of Christ. It exhibits with singular fulness and clearness, the leading doctrines of the gospel. The Lord's Supper again, is exactly adapted to the edification of those who are already admitted into it. It is so constructed, that it may be said of those who observe it, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth, crucified among you." It brings the soul into close fellowship with Him, and so nourishes and strengthens the divine life.

Looking into it more particularly, we need only observe the signs that constitute it, and we shall discern in them the person of Christ, His work, His salvation, and His church. These may be noticed separately.

1. His person. This is presented to our faith in the bread and wine. They are emblems of His body, of its reality, that He was truly a partaker of flesh and blood. But this fact cannot be separated from His original and higher nature. The Son of man, we know, was also the Son of God. Here therefore, we behold the great, glorious, and fundamental truth of Christianity, that "God was manifest in the flesh." We discern a Saviour, who was at once God and man—the fitting person to stand in our room, and "able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by Him."

2. Equally clear is the representation of His work. It is testified in the broken bread. That calls up the fact of His crucifixion. But knowing who He was, it is impossible to resist the inquiry, how or why He suffered? It could not be on account of His own sin, for He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. "He did no sin." His sufferings were for others. The explanation is furnished by the prophet, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "He died, the just for the

unjust that He might bring us to God." His work harmonizes in its importance with the dignity of His person.

3. We are also taught how we are saved by it. The broken bread is eaten, and the wine is drunk. By these exercises we are taught the nature and design of faith. As by eating we partake of food, and so are nourished, in like manner we partake of Christ and live for ever. "He that eateth me shall live by me," said Christ. Eating and drinking are essential to the preservation of life. So we must lead a life of faith upon the Son of God. We "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

4. But these exercises are not observed by us singly and alone. We are associated with others. The Lord's table is thus the emblem of the church of Christ. There is at it the interchange of a holy and heavenly communion. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ, the wine which we drink is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

Is not the ordinance worthy of its author? Nothing can match its simplicity, yet it unfolds to the believer's view the whole circle of gospel truth. It does so in a way most deeply affecting. Its influence therefore has been great, in not only instructing, but impressing the worshipper. And by means of it, as much, perhaps, as by any other ordinance, have the people of Christ been built up in their most holy faith.

How true, then, is the text, "there are three that bear witness on the earth, the Spirit, and the water and the blood; and these three agree in one." Their testimony is one, while with one voice they cry, "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Let us be sure we receive this testimony. "If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater; for this

is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son." It is God that testifieth by the "Spirit and the water, and the blood." They may say, he that rejecteth our testimony rejecteth God's. Shall men do so, and yet receive the testimony of one another? We know they do so. They must do so. They could not live in the world and not do so. It would be unreasonable and absurd to attempt it, yet the same persons can, and often do reject the testimony of God. All do so, who do not accept Christ by a living faith. It will be a solemn account therefore they must one day give. They shall stand before Him as their judge, whom they have refused to believe as a witness. The apostle does not hesitate to say, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." Such is the unbeliever, such is every impenitent soul, such is every ungodly man. Be assured, it is wise now, to "set to our seal that God is true." In so doing, "we receive the witness which God has testified of His Son."

LECTURE XLV.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”—1 JOHN v. 10.

NOTHING could be more satisfactory than the external evidence borne to Christ. The most competent and credible witnesses have attested the facts of His history, and it is on these the doctrines of His gospel are founded. Public ordinances have been established, at once to illustrate and confirm “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Baptism and the Lord’s Supper seem to be referred to in the context, under the names of “water and blood.” Above all, the Spirit has borne witness to Him, in the miracles which both He and His apostles performed, and the gifts and graces which He conferred upon His followers. The evidence thus becomes such as leaves all men without excuse. The argument of the apostle, founded on its nature and fulness, is irresistible. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater ; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.”

There is more, however, than this external evidence, satisfactory as it is. He “that knew what was in man” saw that many of His people would be ill qualified to examine the credibility of such evidence. He has therefore furnished them with another. He has caused it to spring up in their own minds, whenever they receive the gospel. Of it the text speaks, saying, “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

It will be the purport of the present discourse to consider the nature of this internal witness. And our prayer is that we may be enabled to understand it by the enjoyment of it.

1. In the first place, then, it includes a consciousness of the existence of faith in our own minds.

It cannot be denied that such consciousness may exist. Let us call to mind the question of our Lord to Peter, with his answer, and it must be seen it is assumed. Christ asked, "lovest thou me?" and Peter answered, "thou knowest that I love thee." How came Peter to be competent to give this reply? Because he was conscious that he loved Christ, and no one doubts that he may have been so. This, therefore, determines the principle that we may know, by our consciousness, what passes in our own minds.

It is, however, still more to our purpose, to notice that our Lord puts a similar question respecting faith. He asked a man to whom he had given sight, "dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And it is worthy of special notice, that He received a similar answer—"Lord, I believe." Christ expected an answer to His question, and the man never hesitated about his competency to give it. And how else could he give it than by being conscious that he did believe?

The subject is indeed placed in a much stronger light in the divine word. We are there required, in the discharge of an imperative duty, to determine whether we have faith. Thus Paul says to the Corinthians, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." It would not be possible to present the duty more strongly. It is put in various forms, and urged by the most powerful motives. And yet it is such as can be performed only on the assumption that we may be conscious of the existence of the principle, into the reality of which we are required to investigate.

Why may we not be conscious of it? It is of such a nature that, if it exists, it ought to be known. It is not an imaginary feeling, so fleeting and indescribable, that it eludes observation. It is, on the contrary, a solid and enduring substance, which may be recognized and manifested to ourselves and others. Let us think upon it for a moment, and the justness of this observation will be obvious.

What is faith? The Apostle Paul defines it to be "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." It draws aside the curtain which hides the eternal world from view. It gives reality, in our apprehensions, to the future condition of rational and immortal beings. It causes us to live under the influence of things unseen by the eye of sense and that are eternal. It elevates above the world and it begets heavenly-mindedness. Is it unreasonable to expect that there should be a consciousness of the existence of such a principle within us?

More particularly, what is faith, as it has Christ for its great, absorbing object? "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel." Only reflect upon these exercises. It is a grace, because it is the gift of God, produced in the soul by the operation of His Spirit. It is a saving grace, because wherever it is produced salvation is its concomitant and result. By it we receive Christ, embracing Him as our prophet whom we acknowledge as our only authoritative teacher, and as our priest in whose sacrifice and intercession alone we place any confidence, and as our king whom we honour as our lawful Lord and master, and in whom we confide that He will protect us from all who would injure us. By it we rest upon Him in all these relations with unhesitating confidence. We rest on Him alone. And we make no terms, and ask for no conditions, but simply receive and rest upon Him, that He may save us by His

almighty power and infinite grace, as these are freely proclaimed and offered to us in the gospel. Can it be said that these are exercises which elude our observation? Surely, if we can be conscious of any thing that passes within us, we may and ought to be conscious of the existence and operation of faith.

In short, it is the office of faith to receive the word of God as a teacher and guide. It belongs to it to inquire on every doctrine and duty—What saith the Lord? How is it written? Its motto is, “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Its property is to believe whatever God reveals to be truth, to do whatever He commands. “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you,” that the believer may be conscious of the existence of faith within him?

It is admitted the subject is one encompassed with many difficulties. There is extreme danger of self-deception. The solemn interests at stake may well cause us to hesitate and tremble. The very conscientiousness of the believer may betimes help to darken his evidences. Still the real causes of the difficulty are, in most cases, of a very different nature. They are such as to aggravate rather than excuse the evil. One cause is indifference. Men do not desire to inquire into their state before God. Another is worldliness. The present scene possesses attractions far more powerful than the future. Or it may be enmity. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” The subject is nauseated. It is not fairly and reasonably considered. Prejudice, passion, and sinfulness, are allowed to preponderate. And the great question of the reality of our faith is sacrificed at their bidding.

It is admitted also that instances may be found in which a genuine faith may be either doubted or denied. Assurance is not essential to faith. It may exist without it. But our doctrine is that it ought not to be so. It goes farther, and

says as a general rule it is not so. It urges that wherever it is so, there is great distress because of it. And it traces the want of assurance to some undiscovered infirmity or allowed sin, after which there should be the most diligent search, until it is detected and removed. In short, it is held to be a truth, sustained alike by sound reason and the clear testimony of Scripture, that wherever faith is, there should be a consciousness of its existence—that its possessor should be able to testify, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

2. In the second place, by the exercise of faith, the experience of the believer is made to harmonize with the testimony of the divine word, so that the internal witness is confirmed and strengthened.

Our Lord has said, “If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Paul also has expressed a corresponding sentiment when he says, “Ye have obeyed from the heart the form (or mould) of doctrine into which ye were delivered (or cast.)” Both passages assume that the truth of the gospel may be tested and proved by experience. As we act upon it we find it to be true.

This statement admits of a very extensive illustration. Every doctrine of the divine word may be included in it. At present we must be satisfied with a few of those which will be allowed to be fundamental.

Such, for example, is the scriptural doctrine of human depravity. It teaches that all men are sinful, and that every man is wholly sinful. This statement may be denied in both its members. Many do reject them with vehemence. But suppose a man to be taught by the Spirit. Suppose him to be exercised as Paul was, when he said, “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Suppose him to obtain a just view of the nature and demands of the law on the one hand,

and of his own heart and life on the other, and what will his convictions then be? He will be convinced of sin. He will cry with Job, "Behold I am vile." He will have a discovery of himself in full harmony with the testimony of the word. And he will feel that the only prayer becoming him, is that of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The same may be said of the revelation of Christ in the Scriptures. When the jailor, convinced of sin, cried, "What must I do to be saved?" and was instructed, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"—no sooner did he acquiesce in the testimony than it is said, "He rejoiced, believing in God." He found the truth of the word. Whenever he believed in Christ, he obtained repose in Him. Hence it is written, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We who have believed do enter into rest." "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and of his fulness have we all received, even grace for grace." The more Christ is trusted, the more He is enjoyed. Faith is strengthened by experience. We have partaken of food, and found it to be nutritive. So by partaking of Christ, through faith, we have proved Him to be "living bread," of which, "if any man eat, he shall never hunger."

So also with the whole salvation of Christ. It is declared to be full and free. It meets every want, and needs only to be accepted. Let us act on these views, and we shall find them to be just. Whatever our wants be, pardon, or wisdom, or strength, or consolation, or patience, or perseverance, let us only come to Christ, ask it, and receive it, and we shall find that He does not say in vain, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink"—"Hear and your soul shall live." Experience will prove this is true.

Especially let us be assured the Scriptures tell us the truth regarding sin and holiness. They warn us—"be sure your sin will find you out." And they encourage us—"wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Does not our whole experience confirm these testimonies? Whether we look to our own history or that of others we must see these testimonies are true.

And how just are the scriptural representations of the world? They proclaim its deceitfulness and danger, and warn us that we shall find it to be unsatisfying and vain. The label affixed upon it is, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And did the man ever live, who, sooner or later, did not find it to be just?

Let us rest in the assurance that the word of God is true. Let us act upon it and we shall prove it to be so. We shall find it so in its doctrines, and counsels, and promises, and threatenings. We have it in our power to bring it constantly to the test of real life. Our experience will be the confirmation of our faith. And we shall have accumulating proof of the truth of the text, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself."

3. In the third place, the effects and concomitants of faith are a constant and growing testimony to its reality.

It is not too much to say that faith produces a complete revolution in the soul in which it is produced. It is uniformly attended by its regeneration—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." The consequences, therefore, must be the greatest which a reasonable and immortal being is capable of experiencing. And such we find them to be.

Our views undergo an entire change. God, and self, and sin, and holiness, and salvation, and time, and eternity are seen in a new light. The change is said to be "from darkness to light." To instance only one of these topics, observe

what is said of the knowledge of God, which is obtained in connexion with faith—"God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." What a transformation! And it spreads its light over all the subjects that can engage attention.

The tastes are therefore changed. The high estimate and keen pursuit of the world which once prevailed give place to spiritual apprehensions and heavenly aspirations. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The evanescence of time is felt to attach to every thing earthly, but the stamp of eternity is seen upon every thing that is heavenly. How reasonable that in such circumstances it should be said, "our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The result is natural—where worldliness prevailed before there is now heavenly mindedness.

The will is changed. It was formerly obstinate and self-determined. It was bent on its own gratification, and could not brook denial. But it has been subdued. It is felt that the will of God must be supreme, and both righteous and wise. Submission to it must, therefore, be diligently cultivated. The risings of opposition to it are restrained. It is sought to bring our minds into a sweet acquiescence in the will and providence of God. And it is the aim, to whatever extent it may be reached, to say daily and universally, "Thy will be done."

The habits are changed. The spiritual man waits upon God, and "walks with him." He delights in the ordinances by which he holds fellowship with Him. The word is his daily food. Prayer is his constant resource. The Sabbath is his sweetest rest. The sanctuary is his refuge. Providences

are his contemplation. He sees God in everything, and his ceaseless aim is to learn more of Him, and live more to Him, to "acquaint himself with Him and be at peace."

In all this no doubt the believer experiences much difficulty. Such views, and tastes, and habits can be cherished only amid much opposition. But he knows he must "fight the good fight of faith." Nor does he maintain it in vain. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The faith that animates him is the same as that which sustained Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, all the prophets, and martyrs, and apostles, and confessors. His motto may be that of Gideon's army—"Faint, yet pursuing." Still it is felt the work must be done, and the purpose is that by grace it shall be done. The believer has put his hand to the plough, and will not look back. He confides in the promise that "he who has begun a good work in him will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Now, is a work such as this to be maintained in the soul without the consciousness of the subject of it? It must be most strange if it be so. Of all mysteries and miracles that is certainly one of the greatest. Surely if it be unobserved we should fear it does not exist. If the sun shines we behold his light. If the sun of righteousness shine into the heart, we ought to behold his light, and feel his genial influence. Nothing can be at least more reasonable than the text—"He that believeth in God hath the witness in himself."

In conclusion, how thankful we should be that God has furnished such evidence of the truth of the gospel. It is sure Not more certain can we be that honey is sweet when we taste it, than that to "them that believe Christ is precious." It is independent of men. They cannot give it to us, and they cannot take it from us. As well might they persuade us that there are no heavens above us or earth beneath us as

that there is no Saviour within us. And it is accessible to all. It is as strong in the poorest and most illiterate as in the most learned. Many of them, therefore, have said we cannot argue but we can die for Christ, and in so saying they spake not only true religion, but sound philosophy.

Let us then not be satisfied without this internal witness. Some do not seek it, assuming it is impracticable and desiring it to be so. These are in their sins. Others desire it but have not obtained it. The reason must be either want of clearness in their views, or simplicity in their trust, or consistency in their conduct. Whatever the cause be it ought to be removed. Our own peace and the honour of religion demand it. It should be our purpose not to rest until we are enabled, through grace, to attest the truth of the text and say from experience—"he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

LECTURE XLVI.

“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”—1 JOHN V. 10-12.

THE external and internal evidences for the truth of the gospel are both distinctly advanced by the apostle. Of the former he says, “there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one;” and of the latter, “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” In furnishing this twofold evidence the divine wisdom and mercy are alike conspicuous. The different classes of evidence are adapted to different minds, and they serve to confirm and strengthen one another. One person is competent to examine the credentials upon which the gospel proposes itself to our acceptance. He sees them to be satisfactory and he yields a willing consent to their testimony. Another is more satisfied with the practical impression which the truth makes upon his mind. In the one case the heart is reached through the understanding, and in the other the understanding through the heart. Eventually both are fully engaged in the case of every one that cordially accepts the gospel. And hence the reference of the Apostle Peter to both the external and internal evidence,

when he says, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. —We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts."

But what is the design of all this evidence? It is not presented for its own sake. It is intended to induce us to accept the gospel. This is the link by which the text is connected with the subject of evidence. We are reminded that the evidence is such as to lay upon us a most solemn duty. We must receive the truth; and three urgent reasons are assigned why we should do so. 1. The sin of refusing it, for it is an offence against God. 2. The folly of refusing it, considering its nature and value. And 3. The inexcusableness of refusing it, seeing it may be so simply and effectually secured. Let us see how these three thoughts are brought out in the verses before us. And may God impress them on our hearts!

I. The sin of rejecting Christ is very aggravated, seeing it is an offence against God. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

The language is fearfully strong. "He hath made him a liar." Strong, however, as it is, it is only calling the sin by its right name. God has borne witness to His Son in every way that ought to satisfy the most scrupulous mind. He announced His coming for some four thousand years, that the world might be prepared to receive Him. In the fulness of time He sent Him forth with the fullest evidence, in His own life and history, that He was the promised one. And after His departure the apostles continued to testify of Him

by miracles and signs which should have brought conviction to all minds. It is in spite of such testimony Christ is rejected by those who do not believe upon Him. It is the testimony of God Himself which they withstand. Therefore are they charged with virtually pronouncing His testimony false. They "make him a liar."

Our Lord presents the subject in the very same light, denouncing the sin of unbelief with equal severity, and exposing its enormity by tracing it up to the deep-seated love of sin in the heart. It is very noticeable that of all the New Testament writers or preachers, none use language so strong or severe as Christ Himself and His beloved evangelist John. They were more tender and loving than any other, and yet they were more severe. The reason undoubtedly was their more clear perception of the sin, their more bitter hatred of it, and their more just dread of its consequences. We have heard the saying of John, and now hearken to the words of Christ. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "Because their deeds are evil." There lies the secret of opposition to Christ and His gospel. It is the love of sin. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Our Lord and His apostle, however, are not singular in these views. Paul expresses the very same when he says, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." The apostles testified, Jesus testified, God Himself testified. How perilous then to reject such testimony?

It is in the very same spirit the Apostle Peter asks, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" The subject is presented in these interrogatories, because it is impossible to describe either the guilt or danger of unbelief. We are left to ponder them in the hope, that while we attempt to frame an answer, we may be convinced of sin, and induced to come by faith to the only Saviour.

Surely, it is unnecessary to advocate the justness of these views. They commend themselves to our approval. Think of Him from whom the proposal comes. It is from our Creator, Preserver, and Judge. It is from the great God in whom all possible perfections dwell. Think of him to whom the proposal is made. It is to man, a creature, a sinner. Yet this sinful creature takes upon him to reject the proposal of this mighty God. He does so, though it is made to him, accompanied by the most satisfying evidence that it comes from Him. How is such conduct to be characterized? We must acquiesce in the description of the text, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."

II. Such conduct is distinguished as much by folly as by sin, considering the nature and value of that which is rejected. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

It would be impossible to compress more matter, or weightier, in fewer or simpler words. Only consider the blessing proposed, "eternal life;" the source from which it proceeds, "God hath given it;" and the channel through which He conveys it, "this life is in His Son."

1. Eternal life. How are we to describe it? It comprehends all the blessedness which man is capable of enjoying in this life, and in that which is to come. Our description

of it, therefore, must be very defective. All we can attempt is to intimate a few of its prominent features.

The lowest idea we can attach to it is the remission of all our sins. The sentence of death which on their account has been passed upon us is removed. The words of Christ are, "verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." What an unspeakable blessing! It is written, "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Who is there that will not say, Amen? All our transgressions, in thought, word, and deed, blotted out as if they had never been! It is the removal of a burthen greater than we are able to bear.

Great, however, as such a blessing is, it is accompanied by another, greater and better. This is "acceptance in the beloved." Not only is the sentence of death removed, but that of life is pronounced. Not merely is there deliverance from condemnation, but admission to favour. The believer is regarded and treated, not merely as if he had never broken the law, but as if he had uniformly obeyed it. While he is saved from its penalty, he is held to be entitled to its reward. The two blessings arise out of the same source, and that is union with Christ. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." On the ground of His atonement we are at once freed from death, and crowned with life.

Nor is this all. The same prolific source yields another blessing, which is never separated from pardon and acceptance. The dead soul is at the same time quickened and made alive unto God. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is assumed that as out of this union

there grows acquittal, so does there arise also spiritual life. This is the recovery of the soul to true holiness. The eyes are opened to see the vileness of sin, and the beauty of holiness. The ears are unstopped to hear the voice of God in his word and works. The tongue is unloosed to speak with Him in prayer, and for Him to man. The hands are emancipated to engage in His service. And the feet are turned into His ways, and run in the paths of His commandments. The blessings of life are now enjoyed. There is activity with all its healthful exercises. There is purity, with all its peace and prosperity. There is enjoyment, with all its precious treasures. In the measure in which spiritual life is restored, we are made like unto God. This is true at once of his holiness and happiness. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To consummate this blessedness, the stamp of eternity is put upon it. Its highest attainments here, are only the germ of what they shall be hereafter. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know, even as also we are known." "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Perfect conformity to Christ, in mind and body, will constitute the future blessedness of His people. And not till then shall they, in the proper sense and full meaning of the terms, be put in possession of "eternal life."

2. Again, the source from which this blessing is represented to proceed is calculated greatly to enhance and recommend it. It is the gift of God. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is true of every benefit contained in it, and confirmed by it. Is it pardon? "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Is it acceptance? "He hath

made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Is it holiness? "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Is it final and future glory? "The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory." There is no feature of the gospel that calls forth stronger sayings and louder praises than this gratuitous salvation in the Scriptures. Paul exclaims, as he thinks of it, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Alas, that this feature of the gospel should be to many the stumbling-block of offence. They will not receive a gratuitous salvation. They would treat with God. They would purchase from him. But to accept salvation freely, this goes against their nature. Nor will they consent to yield until by divine teaching they are brought to see that every other expedient is vain.

Nor let us omit to be reminded that the high blessedness of which we have spoken is to be secured only now. The inscription written upon it is, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Now we are to have pardon, now favour, now purity, now the hope of eternal life in heaven. For although the full enjoyment is reserved for another world, the possession must be entered upon here. If not saved here, we shall not be saved hereafter. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life."

3. Farther, not only has the apostle described the blessedness,

and the source from which it comes, but the very channel through which it is conveyed to us. "This life is in his Son."

The design of this announcement is at once to instruct and encourage us. It seems to contemplate the mind awakened by such a blessedness as was proposed to it, and inquiring where shall I find it? To such a one it is said, go unto Jesus. As to the famine-stricken inhabitant of Egypt it was ever the direction, "Go unto Joseph," so to the stricken sinner the counsel is, "Go unto Jesus." Eternal life is in Him to be dispensed to sinners. "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him." In Him you will find pardon. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." In Him you will find favour with God. "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." In Him you will find purity. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." In Him you will find eternal life in the highest and proper sense—"Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Say, now, with this view of the blessing proposed to men, what must we think of their conduct who refuse to accept it? Is it not as foolish as it is sinful? It is alike unreasonable and unscriptural. And it only remains to observe—

III. It is inexcusable, seeing it may be so simply and effectually secured. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

To "have the Son" is identified, in the text itself, with believing on Him. "He that believeth not God hath made

him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." This is substantially the same with "he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Let it be remembered also, how John records in his gospel a parallel sentiment, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The doctrine is one. We may have Christ and eternal life in Him simply by believing. This is the constant testimony of the divine word. It is repeated with a frequency and force which show it to be a vital principle. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." The whole question of good or evil from the salvation of Christ is suspended on believing or not believing. It is, however, put in such a form in the text as deserves special notice. Let us observe it.

"He that hath the Son, hath life." So soon as we are united to Christ by faith, we are put in possession of life. This is true of all the blessings contained in it. Then and thus are we pardoned, in virtue of His shed blood. Then and thus are we accepted in virtue of His perfect righteousness. Then and thus are we regenerated in virtue of His imparted spirit. Then and thus are we safe in His keeping for glory, as He assures us, "because I live, ye shall live also." Salvation is a present attainment. When we believe, we have the Son, and when we have the Son, we have life.

This is a blessed statement. But how solemn is the alternative. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He cannot have pardon, for "without the shedding of blood is no remission." He cannot have favour, for, "if a man shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all." He cannot have holiness, for, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And he cannot be an heir of glory, for Jesus hath said, "I am the way, and the

truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Is it possible, we may well ask, that with such a salvation, offered in such a manner, and involving such consequences in its reception or rejection, men can be found so mad as to refuse it? Alas! it is even so. All men have not faith. Nay, we may still cry, "who hath believed our report? to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Or ask, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Are there any of you concerned to believe, yet doubtful of the reality of your faith? Let me exhort you to observe the three terms that are prominent in the text, and consider their connexion. These are "the record, Christ, and eternal life." The record is the truth testified in the word ; Christ is the subject, the sum and substance of that record ; and eternal life is the treasure laid up in Him, for all who become united with Him. Here, then, is the operation of faith. It marks the record, and believes it. Receiving the record it receives Christ the subject of it. And receiving Christ, it receives in Him eternal life, including pardon, and acceptance, and purity, and glory. It may aid some minds, in the exercise of faith, to keep these terms together. As the eye follows them, the heart may catch their sentiment and spirit. Thus, "believing in Christ they may have life through his name."

LECTURE XLVII.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”
—1 JOHN V. 13.

THIS verse may be said to be the text of the whole Epistle. The design of the apostle is, not merely to expound and recommend the way of salvation, but to enable those whom he addresses to judge of their own personal interest in it. He assumes there are some who have “neither part nor lot” in the salvation of the gospel, while there are others who have found it to be “the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation.” “To the one it has been the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life.” Surely of all questions, the most important to be determined by any man is, what is his relation to this great subject? Has he participated in the benefits of the gospel, or has he not? Has he been pardoned, and purified, and made meet for glory, or is he under condemnation, in sin, and incapacitated for the enjoyment of heaven? Has he or has he not been saved? The purpose of the apostle is to enable him to determine this vital question. He enters into it fully and clearly. He lays down the evidences by which every one may judge in his own case. And it is in reference to what he had advanced on this subject, and his design in discussing it, that he says in the language of the text, “These

things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Such being the purpose of the apostle he describes, 1. The persons whom he addresses, "those that believe." 2. He states the object he has in addressing them, "that they may know they have eternal life." 3. He tells them how they may know it, by referring them to "the things which he had written," and 4. He states one great end that would be served by their knowing their gracious state, "that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Let us consider these weighty topics in the light in which the apostle presents them. And may the Lord grant His blessing. 1. The apostle determines who they are to whom he writes, "to you that believe on the name of the Son of God."

At the outset it is essential that it be distinctly understood such persons alone are contemplated. And the least reflection will show the grounds on which such an assumption is placed.

One is that it is only by faith any sinner can be personally interested in the salvation of the gospel. Until he believes, the gospel is to him as if it had no existence. Its provisions, and privileges, and promises are all addressed to him in vain. It proclaims pardon, but he is not pardoned. It offers purity, but he is not purified. It gives life, but he is in death. His unbelief cuts him off from all connexion with Christ. "He that believeth not is condemned already." And under that condemnation he must be until, by faith, he embraces the gospel of the grace of God.

Another ground of the apostle's assumption is, that whenever the sinner believes in Jesus, a total, enduring, and saving change passes upon him. An accomplished fact has taken place in his history, which produces an entire revolution in his state and character. He has "passed from death to life, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto

God." He is "a new creature in Christ Jesus." The change was not greater when he was ushered into natural life than when he became a partaker of spiritual life. All his sins have been pardoned. He has obtained a new heart. He is safe for eternity. "He has put off the old man, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." So it is with every believer.

It need only be added that no other is competent to consider or determine the question on which the apostle desires to engage the attention of those who are addressed. It would be vain to bring before a deaf man the subject of sounds. He does not and cannot understand you. Who would bring before the blind the subject of colours? Why speak to the dumb on the art of speaking? Some notions may be conveyed to them on these questions, but they must be very crude, and erroneous, and dangerous. Not less incongruous must it be to treat with an unconverted man of the questions of experimental religion. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." He is blind, and has not seen the glory of Christ. He is deaf, and has not heard the teaching of the Spirit. He is dead, and no pulse of spiritual life beats within him. He is, therefore, not in a condition to deal with the evidences of his own interest in Christ. His present and grand concern is to secure that interest. His urgent and immediate duty is to believe in Christ. The exhortation and encouragement are addressed to him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Then, and not till then, is he qualified to enter into the subjects which the apostle discusses. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." He is independent of man's judgment, but He determines for himself the great questions of salvation, and his own personal interest in them.

Such, then, are the persons addressed by the apostle. All have a deep interest in what he writes, but they only are competent rightly to understand him and profitably to enter into his views. This he lays down at the outset, saying, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." And bearing this in mind we are now prepared to consider—

2. The object proposed by the apostle in writing to them—that "ye may know that ye have eternal life."

These words must be understood of the believer's personal knowledge of his own salvation. It would be an inadequate interpretation to suppose them to teach merely that he may be assured there is a full provision made for the eternal life of all who shall believe. They go beyond the general doctrine, and clearly teach the personal interest we may have in it, and the assurance of that interest.

This view may be abundantly confirmed by an appeal to the Epistle itself. And your earnest attention is solicited to an examination of some passages obviously and forcibly bearing upon it. Passing by many that might fairly be cited to bear their testimony, we shall confine our attention to those which are so plain that they cannot be misunderstood. They expressly assert in so many words the actual enjoyment of the assurance of salvation. No others shall now be quoted.

We begin with chapter ii. 3—"Hereby we do know that we know him." Christ is meant by *him*. The knowledge of Christ saves the soul. Hence Paul said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." Now, of such knowledge the apostle says, "we do know that we know him." In other words, we know we possess a saving knowledge of Christ.

See next chapter ii. 5—"Hereby know we that we are in him." To be in Christ is to be united with Him by faith.

Thus He says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." And so Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Of such union with the Son of God the apostle says, "we know that we are in him."

In chapter iii. 14 we have the saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." Here is the great change of regeneration. It is nothing less than passing out of a state of spiritual death into that of spiritual life. It is the same of which the apostle Paul says, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." And of this change we are said to be sensible, knowing that "we have passed from death unto life."

The 19th verse of the third chapter contains another testimony. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth." To be of the truth is to be born of it. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The truth is the means of both conversion at first and edification afterwards, according to the prayer of Christ, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Of this influence of the word or truth of God we are said here to be assured.

A similar testimony is in the last verse of the 3rd chapter, the 24th—"Hereby we know he abideth in us." It is the indwelling of the Spirit that is meant. It is the same doctrine which the Apostle Paul enunciates to the Corinthians, saying, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." This is said to be known to him that possesses and enjoys it.

The same view is repeated in chapter iv. 13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us." It is both a repetition of the former thought, and an enlargement and confirmation of it.

In chapter v. 19, it is written, "We know that we are of God." We are born of God. We have thus become His people. We are His children, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

And not to multiply examples farther, we read in chapter v. 20, "We know that we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." We know we have secured a saving interest in the true Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of men.

In the light of these passages, let us now ask how are we to understand the apostle's announcement of his purpose in the text—"That ye may know that ye have eternal life?" Must it not mean a personal assurance of salvation? It can have no other meaning. We are constrained, with such evidence before us, to acquiesce in the doctrine so clearly, simply, and even beautifully laid down in the 18th chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Sect. 1, "Such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; which hope shall never make them ashamed."

Surely the possibility of enjoying such a privilege should at once fill us with gratitude to God, and stimulate us to seek it. Alas! there is a strong prejudice against it. It is to be feared many do not desire to find it true. They feel it requires a measure of decision and spirituality of mind which they do not wish to exercise. It would, therefore, be a relief to suppose it is unnecessary to seek it. But where the Spirit of God really dwells it will not be so. The privilege will be esteemed and sought. There will be no rest until it is attained. All such, therefore, will be prepared to advance with us to the next topic of the text, and consider with the apostle—

3. How this assurance may be obtained. His words are, "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life." He refers them to the things which he had written to them on that subject. Our simple inquiry, therefore, is what are these?

Before noticing them, however, let the principle on which the apostle proceeds be observed. He gives them to understand there are certain evidences into which they must inquire. Some of these are within them, and some without. Many are named, and here, as before, I must solicit your patient examination of the plain words of the apostle, and let them speak for themselves. Your attention will be confined to almost the very same passages that have already been adduced, only extending their views from the assertion of assurance to its evidence.

Chapter ii. 3. "Hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments." This is plain. If a man is conscious that he is allowing himself in the known violation of the divine commandments, he can have no evidence that should satisfy him of his interest in Christ and His salvation. On the contrary, is he conscious that he desires and endeavours to do the will of God, universally, as that is inculcated in His word, that it is his grief and burden when in any thing he goes contrary or comes short of it, then may he infer this is a habit of life which the Spirit of God alone could form within him.

Chapter ii. 5. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him." Is a man conscious that he neglects, or lightly regards, or disobeys the divine word, he must know he is not a child of God. But is he satisfied that he has chosen the word for his guide, to believe what it teaches, and do what it commands, and that it is his purpose and aim to act in

conformity with it, then may he conclude that this is a disposition which grace alone could produce in his soul.

Chapter iii. 10. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." Is our object to serve our day and generation? Or do we live for our own gratification and interest? As we resolve these questions, so may we conclude upon our state.

Chapter iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Whom do we most esteem and love? Who are our companions? What society is our choice? Is our happiness in the converse of the people of God here? And do we long to spend eternity with the spirits of just men made perfect? By our honest answer to these inquiries, we may determine whether we possess the heart of the people of God.

Chapter iii. 18, 19. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." If we embrace the opportunity which God gives us to do good, to render substantial service to those who need our help, this is a proof that God influences us aright.

Chapter iii. 24. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." The Holy Spirit is meant. He is compared to a seal. As a seal leaves its impression behind it, so does the Spirit. Wherever He has been, He leaves His own light, and love, and purity, and power. From the effects we may judge of the cause.

Chapter v. 10. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." As we may be conscious of love or fear, or any other principle within us, so may and ought we to be of faith. Nor should we be satisfied unless we are conscious of the existence and exercise of faith.

Chapter v. 18. "We know that whosoever is born of God

sinneth not." Wherever the new birth has taken place the man will not allow himself in known sin.

These testimonies are sufficient. Let me only remind you that, with one exception, they refer us to the evidence of our conduct as that by which we ought to judge of our state. It is true we are told, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." But He does so by casting light on His own work in our heart and life. If we are in darkness and doubt, our duty is to pray to Him. But we must look for the answer in the clearer apprehensions of our minds and the more consistent and faithful conduct of our life, which he confers. The subject is admirably expressed in the 18th chapter of the Confession of Faith, to which reference was made before, Sect. 2, "This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God; which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."

Of such evidences the apostle may be understood to speak when he says in the text, "these things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." And it only remains to notice—

4. The great end which the apostle seeks by their knowing their own gracious state. "That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

At first sight the words strike us as singular. "I write unto you that believe, that ye may believe on the Son of God." There is, however, a deep meaning as well as much propriety and force in them. Let us try and enter into his sentiment.

He sought to engage them in these exercises that their

faith might be confirmed. They would see the grounds on which it rested more clearly, they would feel the affections it produced more strongly, they would be brought under its influence more powerfully. These were high and holy ends to be sought.

He desired that thus their faith might be increased. "Lord, increase our faith," is a fitting prayer. "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." This habit of mind would reflect the greatest happiness on its subjects, and qualify them for greater usefulness. Therefore the apostle earnestly desired it.

In short, he longed to see them living more and more under the power of that heavenly principle. Thus he hoped they would triumph over sin, over the world, over Satan, over death, and rise at last to the ineffable glory prepared for them in another world.

How well is this view of the subject presented in the article of our Confession, of which we have already spoken! "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereto. And, therefore, it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged, in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness."

Not only is it our duty to seek this assurance but to cultivate it. It is liable to many dangers and interruptions, and we need to cherish it carefully. On this duty we cannot do

better than conclude with the remaining words of the Confession, Chap. 18, Sect. 4. "True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted ; as, by negligence, in preserving of it ; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit ; by some sudden or vehement temptation ; by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance ; and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness, and to have no light ; yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ in the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be received, and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair."

LECTURE XLVIII.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.—1 JOHN V. 14, 15.

THERE is a close, though not, at first sight, an apparent connexion between these verses and that which precedes them. The apostle had addressed himself to those “that believe on the name of the Son of God.” He referred to counsels he had given them in order “that they might know they had eternal life,” and that in the conscious enjoyment of so high a privilege their faith might be strengthened, and elevated, and purified. Supposing them to have gained the high attainment of which he wrote, he assumes their enjoyment of the farther blessedness described in the text. It is the exercise of believing prayer. The connexion, therefore, is that of the assurance of faith with the spirit of prayer. And it is one very obvious so soon as it is pointed out. Whenever we attain to a sense of our acceptance with God, we feel liberty and encouragement to ask of Him those things that are good and necessary. The sentiment is precisely that which is expressed by the apostle Paul, when he says to the Galatians, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father.” It is what our Lord himself encourages, saying—“If your fathers

being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." In the same spirit his apostle writes—"This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us ; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Let us consider the views of prayer here presented to us—its spirit, and rule, and gracious answers. These will be found to comprise the substance of the passage.

1. The spirit of prayer is expressed in the words, "this is the confidence that we have in him."

The nature of this confidence is determined by the connection. It is not the confidence of presumption, but of children in a father. The suppliant has been enlightened to see God and himself in new aspects. God has been made known to him as a Father. Formerly he thought of Him as a Creator, a preserver, and a judge, but the prominent conception is now that of a Father. He has heard the voice of Christ saying to him, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He is thus instructed that he stands to God in the same relation as his own Son. In other words, in virtue of his union with Christ, he is sensible God looks upon him in His Son. Thus he is "accepted in the beloved." He can therefore say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." While he looks upon God as his Father, he regards himself as a son. And so he can appropriate the language of the text and say, "this is the confidence that we have in him."

The descriptions of this high privilege, in the divine word, are often of a very endearing and encouraging nature. In Hebrews iv. 14-16 we have the following passage, "Seeing, then, that we have a great high-priest that is passed into the

heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How rich, and yet tender, are these views? "We have a great high priest." He has been provided for us, and He has undertaken our cause. "He has passed into the heavens." He has gone there with His own blood to present it as a sacrifice for our sin, to offer intercession for us on the ground of its value and efficacy, and to prepare a place for us. This high priest gone on such an errand, is "Jesus the Son of God." He is equal to the work on which He has entered, and it is the very mission which He has undertaken. Well, therefore, may we "hold fast our profession"—the profession of His name and of the hope we have in Him and in His work. Why so? "For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He is not more mighty than He is tender. He is as good as He is great. Of this He has given full proof, having been, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He took our nature, in order to take our place, and subject Himself to all our infirmities and trials, but through them all He maintained His purity and integrity. The conclusion therefore is, that we may say, "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Boldness is a becoming spirit in the believer's approach to God. It is not counted presumption. He comes to him on a throne, but it is "a throne of grace." God occupies it, holding out the golden sceptre of love, that sinners may touch it and live. They come to it for the very purpose of obtaining mercy and grace—mercy that will compassionate them, and pardon all their sins, and grace that will renew and strengthen, and

sanctify them, fitting them at once for the duties and trials of life. O ! what gracious views are these. How natural it is to say, as they are contemplated, "this is the confidence we have in Him." Wherever they are entertained they must inspire confidence.

Yet it is not a passage either singular or solitary. In the very same Epistle to the Hebrews, there is another kindred to it, in the 10th chapter at the 19-22 verses. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The views are substantially the same as before, and the conclusion is the same. Christ is made the ground of confidence in prayer, and confidence is regarded as the natural consequence of trusting in Him.

In a word, the whole subject may be summed up in the language of Paul to the Romans, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Ought we not to be ashamed of the spirit in which too commonly our prayers are presented to God? We approach with fear, and doubt, and suspicion. We might well do so, were it in our own name we went. But seeing it is in the name of Jesus, surely our spirit ought to be honourable to Him. Let us recollect the admonition of James, "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be

given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." God is dishonoured by distrust. Christ is dishonoured by unbelief. The Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, are alike honoured by confidence—the confidence of children. Let us learn to say, "this is the confidence that we have in Him."

2. This view of the spirit of prayer will be both confirmed and directed, while we consider the rule of prayer, prescribed in the text. It is in these words—"if we ask any thing according to His will."

It is clear this rule is intended to remind us, there is to be a limitation in our prayers. We may ask only for that which is "according to the will" of God. In other words, His revealed will, contained in the Scriptures, must be the guide of our prayers. We may ask for whatever is promised there, but for nothing that is not promised there.

This is a practical rule with which it is of essential importance we shall be well acquainted. And a few remarks may be profitable in enabling us to understand it.

It plainly suggests there are many things which we may not ask of God in prayer. We must not suppose we are to follow our own desires in our supplications. We may wish for many things which we ought not to obtain. They may be wrong in themselves. Or, though proper in themselves, they might be hurtful to us. In either of these cases it would be contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God to grant them. For example, I may have a desire to be rich, and honoured, and powerful on the earth. But I have no authority from the word of God to ask Him for this earthly glory. He may please to bestow it on some, but they are not taught to ask it.

This rule also reminds us there are certain blessings which

are right in themselves, and which it may be the will of God to bestow, but which we must ask only in subservience to His pleasure, and service, and glory. For example, I am justified in asking for health within these limitations. So also may I ask a reasonable share of temporal prosperity. There are many things good and right in themselves, which yet it may be both good and right in God, either to grant or withhold. And in all such cases our prayers must be in submission to His sovereign pleasure. A noble example occurs in the history of our Lord's sufferings, when He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And so I may desire to escape suffering, or I may wish for the health and life and prosperity of my family or friends, and I may ask them too, but it must be in subordination to the will of God. He may see good, and it may be right in Him to deny them all.

With all these exceptions, however, the rule before us assumes there are some things clearly declared to be in such full harmony with the will of God, that we may ask them absolutely and confidently, and without any reserve. Nor are these confined within a narrow circle. They contain all that is essential to our real interests, for both time and eternity. And it may be profitable to dwell upon some of the more prominent for a little.

We may ask at once for the pardon of our sins. The promise is plain and universal. "Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The sinner may put his hand on the promise and say, "do as Thou hast said."

The same is true of the renewal of the soul in righteousness. This is the promise, "a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Any sinner may pray

as David did, "create, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

So also may we ask for increasing holiness. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." We need set no limits to our desires after holiness. God has set none. He has said, "open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." The more we ask, the more acceptable are our prayers to Him.

We may also ask for the needful supply of our wants. The promise is distinct, "bread shall be given, and water shall be sure." Our Lord, therefore, puts the petition in our mouth, "give us this day our daily bread." Only it must be remembered that in expecting an answer to such supplications, it must be only in the use of those means which God has appointed. In the neglect of industry, I have no scriptural warrant to expect the supply of my necessities.

In a word, we may ask for the Holy Spirit, and this is the sum and centre of all blessings. It is of this gift Christ says, "ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

We may go beyond ourselves too, and ask for others. We may pray for the conversion and godliness of our household. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Or for the advancement of the cause of Christ in earth. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, give him no rest till he establish, and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." In short, for the universal triumph of grace and godliness. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

There are two duties laid upon us by this view of the rule of prayer, which it is of the utmost moment we should remember and practise. One is, to acquaint ourselves with the word of God, that we may know what we are authorised to ask. We should ever recur to that directory, that so our prayers may be in faith. The other is that we should ask what is there

promised with the assurance of receiving it. There are two errors in prayer marked by the Apostle James, "ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." We may not ask at all, or we may not ask aright. Both are necessary, to ask, and to ask aright. And when we do so, we act in accordance with the text, "this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." We have blessed encouragement to do so, as will soon appear while we consider—

3. The acceptance of our prayers and their gracious answers. "He heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him."

"He heareth us." This is universally true. David addresses God under the title, "Thou that hearest prayer." That is His name. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He is more ready to hear, than we are to ask. He says, "call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will answer thee."

The inference drawn from this character of God, in the text, is, however, peculiarly full of interest, and claims our special attention. "If we know that he hears us, we know we have the petitions we desired of him." It assumes that already we have answers to our prayers. It is with us, in some sense, as it was with Daniel, when it is said, "while he was yet praying" a messenger was despatched to bear an answer to his supplications. It is important to inquire how we are to understand this representation.

God then often hears and answers our prayers, although it may not seem to be so at the time of our entreaty. Remember the woman of Canaan. She besought our Lord. "He answered her not a word." She continued to cry. He seemed to refuse. She persevered. He raised fresh obstacles. She prayed on, and at length He said, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it

unto thee, even as thou wilt." He heard, and answered, even when she must have thought the contrary. And so God may be dealing with many of His people still.

Or He may hear and answer, but not in the way we desire. Consider the case of Paul under temptation. God sent him "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to buffet him." Thrice he cried for its removal. But it was not removed. Was he therefore not heard? By no means. God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The temptation was left, but strength was given to him to withstand it. This was the answer. It was not what Paul sought, but it was better. He saw it was so in due time, for by this means he was at once humbled and sustained. And so he acquiesced and said, "most gladly, therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities—for when I am weak then am I strong."

Besides we may have answers to our prayers, although we know neither the time nor the manner of them. The very exercise is good. The answer may be that God leaves us in darkness and distress, that so we may be stimulated to wait the more earnestly on Him. Our highest edification may be promoted while we are kept in this spirit of dependence and earnest continued supplication.

Still, we may have manifest answers to our prayers. They who look for them will be sure to find them. If we mark the providence of God, we shall discover that He has heard us. The song of David is one which all his people may sometimes sing, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my prayer, and my supplication. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

But it is in eternity we shall see all the answers to all our prayers. Not one prayer of faith was ever offered in vain. It is registered in heaven. It is recorded in the book of the divine remembrance. It has been presented by the

great intercessor, perfumed with the incense of His intercession and atonement. We may therefore wait the Lord's time to see the answer. "The vision is for an appointed time. Though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come." Meantime we need not hesitate to say with the apostle, "this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything, according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

LECTURE XLIX.

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death : I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin : and there is a sin not unto death.”—1 JOHN v. 16, 17.

THE subject of these verses is the duty of intercessory prayer. It is naturally introduced by the Apostle in this place. He had been treating, in the previous verses, of the exercise of prayer for ourselves. He had represented it as a high privilege. “This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us ; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.” The transition, hence, is easy to prayer on behalf of others. If we derive so much happiness and benefit from it ourselves, we must be disposed to embrace others in its sympathy and advantages. It is particularly suitable for the author of this epistle, and the subject of it, to pass in this manner from our own privileges to seek the good of others. John was distinguished by the love of the brethren. The spirit that animated him appeared largely and strongly in the place given to the subject of brotherly love. It occupies a prominent place through the whole epistle. Nothing, therefore, could be more natural than his introduction of intercessory prayer, which he inculcates in the language of the text, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he

shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death ; I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin : and there is a sin not unto death."

The purpose and meaning of these verses are at first sight obscure. We shall endeavour, by the divine blessing, to make them plain. And we shall attempt to do so by soliciting your attention to a few thoughts suggested by the text, and an illustration of them.

1. The offence which is to form the subject of our intercession is characterized as a "sin which is not unto death." The meaning of this phrase seems to be, a sin which may be committed without supposing that the offender is irrecoverably given over to eternal death. In other words, it is a sin into which a believer may be betrayed while yet the divine life is not destroyed within him. We are taught that when a professor of religion falls into any sin, we are not hastily to conclude that he is either a hypocrite or an apostate. He may not be a hypocrite, but on the contrary, truly sincere in the profession which he has been accustomed to make. Neither may he be an apostate, although for the present his principles and purposes have been overborne by the power of temptation. It is no wonderful thing when a true Christian is drawn into sin, considering what his character is, so long as he is in the flesh. He is the subject of a two-fold nature. The address of the apostle to the believing Ephesians is in these words—"Put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your minds ; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The old man and the new man still live in the person of the believer. They severally strive for the mastery. And the contest between them is often bitter and severe. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ;

and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." A most affecting example of the warfare that is ever maintained between them is presented in the case of the apostle himself. His language is singularly plain and pungent, when he describes it. "That which I do I allow not, for what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I."—"I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I find another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." In a character so constituted and influenced, it is not surprising if distressing sins shall sometimes appear. They may do so while the old man triumphs, and the new man is overborne for the time. And in this case there is realized "a sin not unto death."

2. We are guarded, in the text, against thinking lightly of any such sin. "All unrighteousness is sin," we are solemnly and seasonably reminded. And there is necessity for this admonition. We are prone to excuse our sin on the ground of the evil nature that still attaches to us, and the strong temptations which it must encounter. But we are not excused. We are, therefore, reminded that "*all* unrighteousness is sin." It matters not what be the nature of it, or the cause of it, it is held to be sin by our great judge, and will be so regarded and treated. It is to be remembered, if there is the old man still striving to recover his power in us and urge us into sin, there is also the new man pressing us forward in the opposite direction. In its own nature this new man is a mighty element of holiness in the soul. It is the product of the Holy Spirit. It sees clearly the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness. It feels keenly the claims of redeeming love on its universal homage and obedience. It

knows that its best and highest interests are involved in such service. Its power, therefore, ought to be great in resisting the old man. But it is not merely that its own nature is thus holy and strong. The same divine Spirit that first formed it so, continues to dwell in it. The Spirit dwells in the renewed heart to preserve and further His own work. If, therefore, that work is hindered, and the old man betimes gains a victory, the cause must be sought in some inexcusable neglect. Prayer, and watchfulness, and circumspection have not been maintained, as they ought to have been. Our sin is our fault. And it will be so accounted. It will be left to work all its evil effects on ourselves and others. It will make ourselves unhappy, and leave us more defenceless than before. It will be a stumbling-block to others, and prove a discouragement to the godly, while it will strengthen the hands of the wicked. It will cast discredit on religion, so that Christ will "be wounded in the house of his friends." Never, therefore, let us for a moment indulge the idea of either the harmlessness or excusableness of sin, because it is the doing of the godly, and because it may be committed without involving the entire destruction of the divine life. It is not only sinful, as in the most ungodly, but peculiarly heinous and aggravated, as having been committed by those from whom better things might have been expected, and "by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." This is the light in which the subject is presented in the text. While on the one hand it teaches that "there is a sin not unto death," on the other it warns us that this will neither extenuate nor excuse any sin, and that in the sight of God and His law, "All unrighteousness is sin."

3. Carrying these principles with us, we notice farther in the text, that it assumes the frequent occurrence of sin in the professors of religion. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death." It may be paraphrased, since any

man may see a brother sin, while yet he does not deny his religion to be genuine. This is what may be looked for. It is to be seen on every hand. The church has furnished examples of it from the first, and may be expected to do so to the last. Alas! we find it in the most eminent of the servants of God, whose names have been handed down with honour, in the divine page. Even their sins are recorded. The Spirit of truth would not conceal them. They are told for our warning. And it may be profitable to cite a few of the more prominent, that they may serve to put us on our guard.

Abraham is called "the father of the faithful" and "the friend of God." He is held up by the Apostle Paul as an example to the New Testament church, of a man who was "strong in faith, giving glory to God, being persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." His faith and patience were very distinguished. Yet he sinned. And it is remarkable that he did so in the want of the very grace for which he was most eminent. He failed to trust God in the protection and preservation of Sarah, among strangers, so that he was guilty of equivocation and deception in his language and conduct. He was so once and again. Nor was this his only fault. He sinned more grievously in the matter of Hagar, and that many ways. Truly here was a sin, though not unto death.

Job presents another example. He is quoted as an example of patience. That was the very grace which Satan desired specially to assault. You know how successfully he did so, until this man of God was led to curse the day of his birth. Still Job is declared not to have lost his integrity. In the end he rose triumphant over all his enemies and sorrows and sins. But while he lay under them he was suspected, and misjudged, and condemned by his best friends. Their error lay in not apprehending the doctrine of the apostle, which is

now before us, that there may be a sin, which is yet not unto death.

A similar case occurs in Moses. He earned the reputation of being "the meekest man upon the earth." It is singular that the sin into which he was betrayed was the opposite of meekness. His offence was at the waters of Meribah where he smote the rock twice and said, "hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" There was presumption toward God, and anger toward man. And it is observable how severely this sin, though pardoned, was punished. It was because of it that he was refused entrance into the promised land. We must not, therefore, think lightly of any sin, though it be not unto death.

The case of David is still more affecting. It is fearful to think how far he was suffered to go. The most devout, and pure minded of men, as his Psalms testify, he was yet so far overseen and overcome as to be guilty of adultery and murder. He charges himself with "blood guiltiness." Yet he prays, in his deepest humiliation, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The Spirit had not forsaken him, vile as he had made himself. But what sufferings, mental and bodily, did he thus bring upon himself? His case is a terrible warning to all men to beware of those sins that are yet allowed to be not unto death.

We may add the example of Peter. He was a bold, warm-hearted, and courageous man. How strange it appears that the sins specially recorded against him are cowardice and dissimulation? He denied his Lord, in the most aggravated form, while the gentle John stood by him. He dissembled to please the Jews, refusing to eat with the Gentiles, when they were present, though he had done so in their absence, so that Paul says, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."

These are instructive cases. They shew us that our danger

is often greatest, where we think ourselves most secure. There is the assault of Satan mainly directed, and there are we apt to be least watchful. These circumstances are sufficient to account for the universality of sin. We may look for its appearance in all. And the apostle may well assume the existence of the case to which he directs our attention in the text, saying, "if any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death."

4. Let us therefore proceed and consider the duty to which we are then called. "He shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death."

It is the more needful to consider this duty, because there is a strong temptation to neglect it. A brother has long maintained, we shall suppose, a consistent deportment. At length he has been betrayed into some unexpected sin. What is apt to be our first impression so soon as we hear of his fall! Instead of falling back on our acknowledged principles, and feeling that his conduct may readily be explained by them, we are prone at once to suspect all his former professions and appearances. We are not slow to declare that the root of the matter had never been in him. His real character, we are inclined to think, has appeared at the last. We imitate the friends of Job. They told him to his face that his accumulated troubles were a proof of his former hypocrisy. They could not believe that God would have laid such a burthen as he had to bear, on an innocent man. And so we are apt to judge of a fallen brother. We think he has been left to this enormity, that he might be detected and exposed. This was well understood by the apostle, and hence his inculcation of intercessory prayer.

This is a duty of extreme importance and urgency. Let us consider some reasons for the performance of it.

It is ever commended to us by both the examples and precepts of the divine word. What a sight is Abraham pleading

for Sodom? How offensive was the conduct of Jonah to God, when he desired the overthrow of Nineveh? And how forcible the words of Paul, "I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." Above all, remember the example of Christ, in the wondrous prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel.

There is an essential excellence in intercessory prayer, that may well commend it to us. It is a concern for others. It partakes of the generous spirit of the gospel. It rises above self, and deals with the interests of those who may or may not be connected with us. In its very nature it must be most acceptable in the sight of God. It supposes the infusion of His own spirit into our minds, and the imitation of His example.

At the same time it is most profitable to ourselves. It is well fitted to suppress the rising of any unkind, unjust, and ungenerous feelings towards our fallen brother. On the contrary, it cherishes the "charity that covereth a multitude of sins." And it is full of warning. It is the most powerful application to us of the sacred counsel, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We learn to experience, "blessed is the man that feareth alway." Besides, there is no limit to the good that we may thus be the means of effecting. We can pray for many to whom we have no other way of access. They may be removed far from us, or raised high above us, or strongly prejudiced against us. But we can pray for them. The clouds of incense which we thus send up to heaven, through the great intercessor, may fall in showers of blessing on their heads. Our kings and governors and magistrates, and ministers, and merchants, and people, churches and communities alike—Jews and Gentiles, Christians and heathen—missionaries and teachers—may all be blessed in answer to our prayers. If we would be emulous of doing good to the whole world, here is a way patent to all who choose to walk in it.

The promise made to intercessory prayer is full of encouragement. "He shall give Him life for them that sin not unto death." This promise is exactly parallel to another given through the Apostle James, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Assuredly we ought to estimate the privilege, and covet the high honour and extended usefulness of intercessory prayer.

5. One solemn consideration remains to enforce this duty, which is urged in the text with strong and repeated emphasis. "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."

What is this sin? There is only one sin represented in the Scriptures to be unpardonable. It is known there by the name of the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is thus spoken of in various places. "The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men"—"Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come"—"If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

Why is this sin unpardonable? Because in its very nature it consists in the rejection of the only way of salvation which God has provided. He has given His Son to save sinners, but this sin is a wilful, contemptuous, determined, and continued rejection of Christ and of His salvation.

This explains why we are not to pray for it. To do so

would be to ask God to contradict His own word—to dishonour His law—to degrade His Son—and to abandon His government of the world. We may and ought to pray for every man, that through repentance and faith in Christ, he may be saved. But we must not pray that without repentance and faith in Christ he may be saved. God has said, “there is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus.” In this testimony we must acquiesce, and not even ask God to save the sinner in his unbelief. There is a sin unto death, and we cannot pray for it.

And what application has this argument to the subject before us? A very close one. It is twofold.

It is a most solemn warning to the man who has been betrayed into sin. His situation is most critical; there is danger of his continuing in his sin. There is danger of his waxing worse and worse. He may fall into utter apostacy. He may be left to such blindness and hardness as shall end in the sin against the Holy Ghost. Let him, therefore, beware, and by a timely repentance let him return to God, who has graciously said—“I will heal your backslidings and love you freely.”

There is, at the same time, a warning to those who are called upon to pray for a fallen brother. That should be a lesson to them. They are exposed to the same dangers and temptations that have cast him down. They are sailing in the same sea, amid the same rocks and quicksands, and they may make like shipwreck of faith. While, therefore, they pray for others, let them consider themselves. Let them deprecate the apostacy of themselves or others—remembering the text, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

LECTURE L

“ We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not : but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”—1 JOHN v. 18.

THE sacred writers discover an extreme jealousy for the holiness of believers. Paul says to the Corinthians, “ I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” To the Ephesians he writes, “ Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” It is in the same spirit the words of the text are uttered by the apostle John. He had spoken of the sins of believers in the preceding verse. Assuming they would be betrayed into them, he inculcates the duty of intercessory prayer on their behalf. “ If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.” He seems to have feared that such admissions might possibly be abused by some, as if they represented sin to be inevitable, and therefore that we need not be too much concerned about the commission of it. Hence he guards his doctrine by immediately adding, “ All unrighteousness is sin.” And he pro-

ceeds to show what a complete and effectual provision had been made for holiness, saying, in the language of the text, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Let us consider this provision for the holiness of believers ; and we cannot better do so than by attending separately to the three clauses of which the text is composed. May the Lord enable us to enter into their views.

1. " We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not."

This statement is made with the utmost confidence. It is assumed to be true and undeniable. All who were acquainted with the gospel and those who embraced it must be familiar with it as one of the simplest principles of the " truth as it is in Christ." Hence says the apostle, " we know it."

Yet his words cannot be understood literally and universally. No living man would say of every believer, he sinneth not. He would not say it of himself. " If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He would not say it of those who lived in other times, for he finds that the Scriptures record the sins of the most genuine servants of the Lord. Abraham, and Job, and Moses, and David, and Peter were recently noticed as among the number. He would not say it of those who now live, for he has only to open his eyes and see that every one of them sins.

Still there is a sense in which it is true of every converted man that he sinneth not. Nor is it difficult to determine what it is. Sin is not his *habit*. He does not live in it. On the contrary, holiness is his habit. And he is known as one who does not violate, but keeps the commandments of God. Sin is not his *pleasure*. He hates it. When he is betrayed into it, it is his grief and burden. Holiness is his delight, and he can truly say that " in keeping of God's commandments there is great reward." Sin is not his *purpose*. On the contrary,

he resolves wholly and for ever to abandon it. He says with David, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." It is, therefore, not his *practice*. He is not an ungodly, but a holy man. And thus understood, the saying is strictly true that "he sinneth not."

It must be so. The reason is assigned in the expression before us, and it is of such a kind as must be effectual. "He is born of God," therefore "he sinneth not." The connexion between the new birth and the destruction of sin is inseparable, and may easily be illustrated.

It arises from the author of this gracious work. He is none other than God. The divine testimony is—"born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Especially we are taught this is the work of the Spirit in the human mind. Christ has said, "Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." What, then, must the work be that proceeds from such an author? It must be like Himself, holy. This is the very argument of John in another part of this epistle. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Wherever the Spirit works He leaves His own impression. And hence the exhortation—"As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy."

It arises not only from the author of the work but the subject of it. This is the heart of man. The promise is, "a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Nothing else would suffice. No education, nor prudence, nor example, will avail to destroy sin and secure holiness. Unless the heart be changed the life will be unholy. But if the heart is renewed the provision is effectual. The fountain is then cleansed and the streams will be pure. "A good man

out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.’

It arises also from the very instrument which the Spirit employs in the renewal of the heart. This is the word of God —“Born not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.” “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” Thus the mind is enlightened to apprehend the meaning of the word, and the excellence of its counsels is perceived and estimated. It is loved, as it has proved to be the channel of the highest blessings. The soul says with David, “O how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day.” It is obeyed. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clear, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” What must be the influence and effect of such subjection as this to the Word of God.

It arises, in short, out of the very nature of the work, produced by the Spirit in the heart, through the word. The man becomes by it a new creature. The whole man is regenerated. The understanding is enlightened to distinguish between sin and holiness. The will is made meekly submissive to the will of God. The affections are engaged and set with intense desire on the objects that ought to captivate them. The active powers are all roused to activity and employed for God. Divine principles are implanted and sanctified dispositions are brought out into exercise. “Now abideth faith, hope, charity.” “The work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope,” are all made to appear in the life. The man is made a partaker of the divine nature, and acts accordingly.

Say now what must be the effect of an operation such as

this on the believer's mind? Must it not be mighty and effectual? Nothing could be more natural, reasonable, or necessary than the statement we have been considering—"we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not."

2. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself."

It is observable that the figure of the new birth is still kept up in the text. Born of God and begotten of God are similar terms, expressive of the same divine work. The design, no doubt, is to keep us mindful of the necessity of a complete and divine change, that holiness may both be begun and maintained. God only creates the heart anew in righteousness, and He only can uphold it in the prosecution of holiness of life.

It is this maintenance and furtherance of holiness, that is now brought before us, in contrast to its commencement, or in continuance of it. It is begun when the soul is born of God, and it is upheld and advanced as "he who is begotten of God keepeth himself." The expression of "keeping himself," implies danger and difficulty. It is assumed that he has many enemies whom he must encounter and overcome. When he is born of God it is that he may fight the good fight of faith with the world and the Devil and the flesh. This he is prepared and enabled to do. The provision is as great and effectual for the preservation of holiness as its commencement. And this is what is brought before us when it is said, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself."

There is a sense in which this statement cannot be understood literally. It does not mean that the regenerated man keeps himself, so as to be independent of divine support. To the end he is as dependent on the grace of God as he was at the beginning of the divine life in his soul. Paul says of his own preservation, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son

of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Of all his labours and attainments he says, "I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." "By the grace of God I am what I am." Peter says of all believers that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." And our Lord traces out their safety to the same source when He says, "my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." The moment we forget our dependence we are overcome. If ever we trust to our own wisdom we go astray. If we ever rely on our own strength we fall. Remember Peter. "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." "Before the cock crow thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." So he did, and bitterly did he learn his weakness and inconstancy, when "the Lord turned and looked upon him," and in shame and sorrow for his sin, "he went out and wept bitterly." Never, therefore, must we forget that the saying is not to be understood of our own power or purpose when it is said, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself."

What, then, is the sense in which it is to be understood? To perceive this, it is to be remembered there is no inconsistency between the efficacy of divine grace, and the duty of personal activity. The sovereignty of grace and the responsibility of man are both distinctly taught in the word of God. The exhortation of Peter proceeds on their harmony when he says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and do of his good pleasure." Instead of the work of grace being a reason why we should not put forth our strength it is assigned as a motive for our encouragement. It is well, and wisely, and

graciously so presented. It were vain to urge man to his duty if he were dependent on his own powers. He would only be cast into despair when he made the attempt. On the contrary, when he is assured of divine help, he is encouraged to put forth all his energy and activity. This is the principle on which we are to understand the statement now before us. And proceeding upon it, let us inquire how, or by what means, it may be said of him that is begotten of God, "he keepeth himself."

He does so by prayerfulness. Knowing how weak and erring he is, he looks habitually to Him that is infinite in power and wisdom. His desire is to be able to say, "out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." But to this he knows he can attain only by prayer, since it is written, "your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." To them that ask him, and to none other. So long, therefore, as the Spirit of prayer is maintained we are safe. Whenever that waxes cold, or is restrained, we become helpless. We are rendered like Samson, when he was shorn of his hair. Our strength goes, as prayer ceases. On the contrary, while like the apostle we cry to the Lord, we obtain the gracious answer, "my grace is sufficient for thee," and we may say with Him, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

Again, "he keepeth himself" by the diligent study, and devout meditation of the inspired word. As the ship sails the dangerous sea, its prudent commander keeps a close eye to his chart. He marks the currents and sunken rocks of which it warns him. And he is careful to guide his ship in the right and safe course. So must every mariner on the sea of life keep his eye to the chart of the scriptures. There he sees the dangers that beset him on every hand. By this guide he learns what is the course he must ever follow. He that leaneth to his own understanding is a fool. He that searches the scriptures, finds that they make him wise unto salvation.

With prayer and the word, he connects circumspection. He must watch himself as well as others. The rising passion, the hasty word, the unpremeditated act must be suppressed and restrained. The events that are passing around must be keenly observed. The doings, and designs, and influences of others must be well considered. It is not enough for the mariner that he keep his eye to the chart. He must keep a look-out in accordance with its directions. He must observe as he nears the hidden bank, or the deceitful current. And so must the Christian, as Israel, when Moses warned them, "in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect," or as the early church, whose members the apostle counselled, "see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."

Nor must we fail to add, he must keep himself by a healthful occupation of all his powers in the way of well-doing. The indolent, or idle man, is exposed to imminent danger. The powers and talents which God has given, must somehow be employed. If it is not in good, it will be in evil. The motto of the Christian should be, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." In doing good he will exercise and strengthen his powers. The habit of holiness will be formed and confirmed. And so, "he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself." The consequence is stated in the third aspect in which he is presented in the text, to which we now proceed.

3. "And that wicked one toucheth him not."

By the wicked one it is obvious we are to understand Satan. He is eminently the wicked one. Ruined himself, his whole purpose and effort are to ruin others. Wickedness is the element in which he lives and delights. And therefore it is with singular propriety he is called "the wicked one."

When it is said, "he toucheth not the man that is born of God, and that keepeth himself," it cannot mean that such a one is free from his malevolence and assaults. On the contrary, his enmity is specially directed against all such. It

was in her innocence he compassed the ruin of Eve, and her posterity. It was when Joshua, the high priest, stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan was seen at his right hand. It is when the soul is truly converted, and there is an earnest purpose and effort to do the will of God, Satan will try to hinder. It was when our Lord came from His baptism, full of the high and holy design of His mission, He was attacked by the furious assaults of forty days and forty nights. It was after Paul had been caught up to the third heavens, the messenger from Satan was sent to buffet him. We must never, therefore, suppose that at any time, or in any circumstances, Satan will cease to harass the people of God.

How, then, is it said, "the wicked one toucheth them not?" The context explains the meaning. The apostle had spoken of a "sin unto death." He had gone so far as to say, we are not to pray for it. It is with this special sin in his view he says of the believer, "the wicked one toucheth him not." He means clearly he shall never prevail on him to commit it. No doubt he will try, but he will never succeed. God will preserve his watchful servant from it. And the promise is therefore a most gracious assurance that Satan shall never be allowed to overcome the living faith of one that is born of God.

The case of Job illustrates the sentiment. Satan was permitted to tempt and harass him, but a limit was assigned him. God said, "he is in thine hand; but save his life." Now this is a model case. The Lord permits Satan to assault His servants. He may do his worst upon them. But there is one reservation. Their life must be saved. This is as true of their divine life, as it was of Job's temporal life. Within a certain limit they may be tempted, but no farther. James iv. 7; Mat. iv. 11.

This is a most instructive view of the Christian life. And it is well to ponder it.

It teaches us what is its nature. It is a warfare. It is a powerful comment on the address of the Apostle to the Ephesians. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints," Ephes. vi. 10-18.

It is full of warning. We are going up through an enemy's land. His agents are on every hand, seeking to intercept and overcome us. Alas! there are enemies within our own camp. Many are gathered into our hearts, ready to open to the foe. We need therefore to look within, as well as without and around. Ever let us hear the voice of Jesus saying, "what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

But it is also full of consolation. "God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper." The word of the text shall ever be verified, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

LECTURE LI.

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”
—1 JOHN v. 19, 20.

IT is observable how frequently the apostle uses the expression “we know,” and to how many sentiments he applies it. Confining our attention to the chapter before us, we read, “we know that we love the children of God—we know that we have eternal life—we know that we have the petitions we desired of him—we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not—we know that we are of God—we know that the Son of God is come—we know Him that is true.” This style is singular, and it is not less instructive. It is exponent of the nature of true religion. That is not an opinion, but a certainty. It is not some doubtful speculation, but a reality of which we are conscious. This remark applies to all that is essential in the gospel of Christ, as well to the great objects of faith, as to our personal interest in them. Every one who truly apprehends it knows its truth, and his own fellowship with it. He knows Christ, and the salvation which He has conferred upon him. He knows them in the same way that he knows the value of the food that nourishes him, or the

raiment that clothes him, by experience. He can say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." He knows its truth because he has felt its power.

It is in this spirit that several important articles of Christian faith and experience are brought before us in the text. We shall consider them in the order in which they are presented, praying that we may be enabled to adopt them "in spirit and in truth."

1. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

"We are of God." The expression is used in the most comprehensive sense, as declarative of high Christian privileges and enjoyments. We are born of God. A new and spiritual birth has passed upon us, by which we have become new creatures. God is our Father, as he was not before, and as he is not to any who have not been made the subject of His grace. As children we are members of the family of God. We bear His likeness. We are associated with His people. We enjoy communion with Him and them. We are heirs of God. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." All our hopes are derived from Him. We are thankful for present blessings, but it is to eternity we look for the realization of perfect blessedness. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." "We walk by faith, not by sight." "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." "Our conversation is in heaven." In a word, to express our spirit, and pursuits, and hopes, and character, and desires, and prospects, we may say, in the brief but comprehensive words of the Apostle, "we are of God." We are His and He is ours.

This high estate of the believer is greatly enhanced by the consideration with which it is connected, "And the whole world lieth in wickedness." Literally the sentiment is, "in the wicked one." As the believer is God's, the world is Satan's. Hence he is called "the Prince of this world." He is described as "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." They are said to be "led captive by him at his will." The peculiar representation of the text is very forcible. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." It lieth in his arms. He carries it as he will. As Samson slept on the lap of Delilah, so does the world repose on Satan. It is an unconscious and willing captive. It does not know the cruel tyrant that lords over it. It fancies music in his chains. These are the testimonies of Scripture, and they are confirmed by our own observation. The conduct of men is, in many things, not to be accounted for, but on the admission of Satanic power. Human depravity, deep as it is, will not explain it. We see men pursuing courses that are not natural to them. They are committing sins which they condemn and hate, and which they know must terminate in their ruin. It is impossible not to be convinced they are acting under some external impulse to which they have yielded themselves. It is that of Satan, who has gained the mastery over them. And thus the facts of human history are a corroboration of the declaration of the text, "that the world lieth in the wicked one."

What a contrast between the two companies spoken of in this verse! The one is "of God," the other "lieth in the wicked one." To the one or the other every human being is attached. There are only the two great classes in the family of mankind. Either we are "of God" or of "the world." Surely it is our duty to inquire with which we have cast in our lot. If we see that the world is our portion, surely we shall not be satisfied with it. We should consider ourselves

addressed in the words of the apostle, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." As Lot was dragged out of Sodom before it was destroyed, so should we be induced to quit the world before it is wrapped in the flames of the divine judgment. If we are in doubt what our position is, let us remain so no longer. Why halt between two opinions? "Remember Lot's wife." She hesitated, and lingered, and looked back, and perished. And her monument stands a warning against worldliness in all generations. If we have been enabled by divine grace to abandon the world and cleave unto the Lord, let us be thankful. But let us shew our gratitude by our consistency. We should hear the exhortation of the apostle, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Let us act thus, and it will be our privilege to say, "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one."

2. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true."

The original proof that "the Son of God is come" is in the external evidence of His appearance and mission. Credible witnesses saw, and heard, and conversed with Him. "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty." "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." The life of

Christ was a full proof of His Messiahship and mission. It was in strict harmony with ancient prophecy. The very man who had official charge of His crucifixion was so impressed by the prodigies that accompanied His death that he exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." No doubt can remain where sufficient evidence will satisfy "that the Son of God is come."

It does not seem, however, to be this external evidence to which the apostle adverts in the text. It is the internal evidence of the believer's experience. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Nor is this a mere questionable feeling about which we may readily be deceived. It consists in a sensible enjoyment of the great ends proposed to be answered by the mission of Christ. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captive; and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Suppose these ends to be accomplished in any person and place, and may not the fact be a full proof of the reality of Christ's mission? These are not airy imaginations, but substantial realities. The sinner has felt his poverty, but in Christ he has found true riches. He was humbled and afflicted by a sense of sin, but in Christ he has found consolation. He was a slave to Satan and evil passions and habits, but in Christ he has been made free. He was ignorant and blinded, but Jesus has given him light. He was wounded by the fetters of his former slavery, but Christ has applied His healing balm to his soul. He has been made to rejoice in the Gospel of His grace, and it has proved to be the jubilee of his life. This is only the history of a sinner's conversion. These are the changes then produced, and the benefits therein conferred. They are of such a nature as to evidence their own

existence and reality. They carry with them a self-evidencing light. Can anything be more natural than that he who enjoys them should be able to testify to the mission of Jesus, and say with the apostle in the text, "We know that the Son of God is come?"

It is precisely one of these effects that is cited by the apostle, as that which had been realized by those in whose name he wrote. "He hath given us an understanding." They were conscious of an enlightenment of mind, through the knowledge of Christ, such as they had never previously experienced. They could say, as the man to whom Christ gave sight, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." They have obtained views which they never had before of sin and of themselves, of Christ and His salvation, of the world and eternity. They thought sin a trifle, but they have learned it is a fearful and "abominable thing;" they thought themselves reputable among men and safe toward God, but they have seen they are vile, and exposed to imminent peril. They regarded Christ as worthy of some regard, but they have been constrained to say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." They counted his salvation valuable, but they have been led to perceive it is "the one thing needful." They thought the world all-important, but they have discovered the true inscription upon it, "Vanity of vanities." They were little concerned for eternity, but it is now their all-absorbing contemplation. All things are seen and judged in the light of it. Truly they may say, "He hath given us an understanding."

But this enlightenment again is confined in the text to one chief object—"That we may know him that is true." While all other subjects are presented in new aspects to the converted soul, God is the great subject of the new discovery. The apostle has expressed it powerfully and well, saying,

“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.” “God in Christ” has been made known to him. He realizes and apprehends Him “God his Saviour.” All His perfections are seen gloriously harmonizing to secure the one great end of the sinner’s salvation. Not one of them is dishonoured, but all are magnified by it. His truth is preserved inviolate. His threatenings are all executed, but they have fallen upon the head of the sinner’s substitute. In Him “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” “In him the promises of God are yea and amen.” The sinner has only to confide in Him and be saved. This he now discerns, and, therefore, from experience he can say, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.”

This is a blessed arrangement of divine wisdom and grace. The doctrines of the word may be tested by a personal application of them. “If any man shall do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” Every one has it in his power to try this confirmation of them. Nor is the case already cited the only example in the text. There is another, to which we are now conducted.

3. “And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.”

This expression determines that “by him that is true,” we are to understand God, and that we have done right in so interpreting it. The question, therefore, that comes before us now is in what sense we may be said to be in him?

Throughout this epistle the subject is frequently noticed, and the inspired language is very deep and forcible. “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” “If we love one another,

God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” These are wonderful sayings. Nothing could more strongly express the close communion that subsists between the believer and God. It will have been observed that in several of the passages cited, it is attributed to the indwelling of the Spirit in the soul of the believer. Nor ought it to be overlooked how it is associated with two attainments, which are ever regarded as essential to it. The one is a clear apprehension of the way of salvation by Christ. And the other is a life of strict fidelity and devotedness to His service. It is as these two attainments are enjoyed and exercised, the sinner may hope to have communion with God by His Spirit—that the Spirit will dwell in him, spreading His light, and love, and influence, and power, through his soul. It is then “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

But in the text, there is another explanation of the way in which this communion is attained and enjoyed, which ought not to be overlooked. As soon as it is said, “We are in him that is true,” it is added, “Even in his Son Jesus Christ.” This makes the subject much plainer. We rise to communion with God by holding fellowship with His Son. They are substantially the same thing. We meet with God in Christ. It is said of the ancient mercy-seat, “There will I meet with thee, and commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim, which are upon the ark, of the testimony of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.” That mercy-

seat is an emblem of Christ. "God hath set him forth to be a propitiatory or mercy-seat." Coming to Him there he communes with us. We may tell Him all our wants, and receive from Him according to our largest desires. We can see His face and not tremble before Him. In all His perfections we see the guardians of our safety and happiness. We may say as we contemplate Him, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." We may triumph in His fellowship, and cry, "This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death." "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

These are exercises of which the devout and thoughtful soul may be conscious. They are palpable realities, tested by undoubted experience. If they are not enjoyed there is reason to fear either that the blessings have not been realized, or that they have not been sufficiently cultivated. Let us learn at once our duty and privilege, and not be at rest until we are enabled to say, "we know that we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

4. In the last place the apostle proclaims the source and security of all these blessings, saying, "this is the true God and eternal life." Let us consider these weighty words.

There can be no doubt they refer to Jesus Christ. We are shut up to this conclusion by the construction of the passage. Christ is the near and natural antecedent to the assertion of the apostle. This view, besides, is in exact harmony with other sayings of this apostle. In his gospel he says, "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men—all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Then in this very epistle

his language is, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—for the life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and shown unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." We may well believe it is of the same being he speaks when he says in the text, "This is the true God and eternal life."

But the subject is too high and holy to be presented in the light of a mere controversy. Rather far, would we regard and represent it as a most blessed and delightful announcement, containing, in few and simple words, the highest hopes of the sinner and the surest portion of the believer. Only think upon them.

"This is the true God." The names of God are given to Him. The attributes of God are ascribed to Him. The perfections of God belong to Him. The worship of God is rendered to Him. He is the true God. This is taught, that sinners may be persuaded "he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." They may hear Him saying, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides me there is none else—a just God and a Saviour."

"This is the true God and eternal life." He is manifested as "the true God," ready and able to confer "eternal life" on all who are willing to accept it. He will pardon their sin, renew their hearts, preserve them in life, sustain them in death, and consummate their happiness in heaven. In Him there is all they need or can ever enjoy. Let them hear Him crying, "come unto me." Let them note His last prayer, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee ; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou

hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Surely, with such words sounding in our ears, we may learn to say with the apostle, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true : and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

LECTURE LII.

“ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

1 JOHN v. 21.

THESE closing words of this epistle are worthy of its venerable author, and of the Spirit by which he spake. They are distinguished by tenderness of spirit, simplicity of diction, and comprehensiveness of meaning. “ Little children ”—this is his farewell salutation. He had used it often before, but never with so much affection and concern as now. He had finished his address to them, and his age and infirmities reminded him he could not expect to speak much more to them in the flesh. It is believed this epistle was among the latest of his compositions. So he takes leave of his beloved ones, as an aged parent leaving his last counsel with his “ little children.” He speaks simply and plainly as, in such circumstances, it became him to speak. Even they who in years were little children could not fail to understand him. How much more must his words have been plain to those who, in spirit and habit of mind, exemplified the simplicity that is in Christ as “ little children.” Yet the thoughts are as weighty as the words are few and simple. They comprehend, in a sense, all he has said to them in his letter. In his style and habit of thought he strongly resembles his divine Master. No one ever spoke so simply, nor yet so expressively as he. The beloved disciple comes nearest to him,

and the text is an example—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

These words may be considered, 1. in reference to the peculiar circumstances of those whom the apostle addressed, and 2. as they are applicable to all persons and all times. May the Lord bless them to us as the concluding counsel of the venerable apostle, to whose instructions we have been privileged so long to give our attention!

I. The text has a peculiar signification, as an address to the disciples of the apostle's day.

They lived among idolators. Their customs and practices were ever before their eyes. Their thoughts and ideas were continually obtruded on their notice. The air which they breathed was contaminated by the impurity of their ideas and habits. They thought of their gods as beings like unto themselves. They ascribed to them all manner of evil passions and vile affections. They made them the patrons of all kinds of abominations. One was the god of war, and delighted in its bloody encounters. Another was the god of revelry, and rejoiced in its outrageous orgies. A third was the god of sensual pleasure, and gloried in its most extravagant excesses. Think of the public sentiment, and taste, and feeling in such a community. How dangerous it must have been to have lived in continual contact with them. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." It is as the pressure of the atmosphere upon the body. It surrounds it, and envelopes it, and influences it, at all times, and in all circumstances. We cannot escape from it. As the day is dark and dismal, or bright and lively, so are we. National character depends largely upon the influence of climate. So also is it with the mind. Its views and tastes and habits are mightily influenced, though unconsciously, by the influences to which it is habitually exposed. The apostle saw the danger to

which his beloved disciples were thus exposed, living as they did, among a heathen population. It mattered not, that in many respects the people of Ephesus were civilized and refined. The arts and sciences were known and cultivated. Still, their moral perceptions were dark and impure. Of the true God they had no just conceptions. Their ideas of Him and of His service were the most corrupt and corrupting. Well therefore might the aged apostle, in jealousy for his spiritual children, and the God and Saviour whom they worshipped and served, take his last leave of them, saying, "little children, keep yourselves from idols."

These thoughts are not imaginations. We know from history they were stern realities. The Apostle Paul urged the same lesson again and again, on the churches to which he wrote. Particularly in the refined city of Corinth, he found it necessary to deliver earnest and lengthened counsels upon the subject. The 8th and 10th chapters of his first epistle to the church collected there are mainly occupied with it. It appears from what he says, that many questions of great practical interest arose out of it, on which diversity of opinion and practice prevailed among the members of the church. These threatened to rend the infant community asunder. How far was it lawful or unlawful to associate with idolators? What practices of their's were harmless or hurtful? What was indifferent, and what sinful? Wherein would compliance be inconsistent with Christian doctrine and duty? And wherein was it allowable? What should be the rule of conduct in the idol temple, or the market place? Might Christians go into the temples, and act as if they believed "an idol was nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one?" Might they pursue the same course in the market place, and buy and eat as if there were neither idols nor idolators in Corinth? Many cases of great perplexity arose out of these questions. Dissension agitated the

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church respecting them. The apostle needed to interpose with apostolical authority and counsel. He tried to teach the members of the church to distinguish between an act indifferent in itself, and the same act as it might be interpreted by others who witnessed it. Some of the highest principles of Christianity are brought out by the discussion of these intricate questions. Alluding to one practice, in itself wholly indifferent, eating what had been presented in an idol's temple, as was customary at Corinth, the apostle says, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." The thing itself was nothing, but in its influence it might be injurious; therefore it was to be shunned. This counsel, therefore, was the same as John's, that they must not touch, taste, or handle the dangerous thing. His words are, "wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."

A very singular but most instructive example, illustrative of these remarks, may be found in the directions of the apostle to the Corinthians, in the matter of the Lord's Supper. The influence of the surrounding idolatry had proved most disastrous to that ordinance. So thoroughly had it corrupted it, that the apostle tells them distinctly, "when ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." His meaning seems to be that they had lost sight of the real ordinance, and that what they observed under the name of the Supper, was in reality not the institute of Christ.

He alludes to the destructive innovation, saying, "In eating every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken." They had introduced to the Church of Christ the practice of the idol temples, in which they had been accustomed to indulge before their conversion. That practice was to dress and carry down food to

the temple, present it to the idol, and then sit down with their friends before the idol, and enjoy themselves in a sumptuous entertainment. In imitation of it, the Christians, who had been heathen idolators, carried their entertainments to the church, under the name of the Lord's Supper, and regaled themselves and their friends. Hence might be seen, in one part of the church, a poor man with his simple fare, and in another part, a rich man with his luxurious repast, so that while the one was hungry, the other was drunken. It was no wonder the apostle should tell them this was not the Lord's Supper. He might well say with indignation, "What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?" This is one example of the debasing influence of a surrounding idolatry. It seems to us as if it were impossible such abuse of a sacred ordinance could ever find entrance among us. But we are mistaken. No limit can be set to the contagious power of evil example. When the eye gets accustomed to it, the heart soon yields to its influence. What has been may be again. We do not know how much reason we have to be thankful for deliverance from the presence of an outward idolatry.

Even now, all professing Christians are not so delivered. The complaints of missionary families in heathen countries are still loud and painful. Parents feel the exposure of their children to heathen influence to be most perilous. In most cases they consider it necessary to remove them from it altogether. Even on themselves, with all their light, and purpose, and watchfulness, the influence sometimes proves to be insidious and hurtful. Our own personal history furnishes a feeble example. My ministry began in a part of this country where the Sabbath was not revered. The first feelings produced by this desecration were extremely painful. The recurrence of the holy Sabbath was the return of an

agonized mind, as I made my way through crowds of idle and ignorant Sabbath-breakers, loitering about, and waiting for amusement or employment. But a residence of four years reduced the keenness of feeling. It had no effect to endanger sound views, for these had been formed too carefully, and sustained too constantly by the testimony of the divine word. Yet the acute painfulness of first impressions did pass away. Custom made the sight less agonizing. And although grace would have been sufficient to have preserved principle, I should not have chosen the continual influence of the deadening associations. This passage of personal history has afforded to me, and is now given to you, as some illustration of the meaning and seasonableness of the apostle's counsel when it is literally understood, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

II. There is, however, a more extended application of the words, to all persons and times, to which we now proceed.

It is humiliating to think that a tendency to idolatry has been manifested in the Christian church, not only by the Corinthians, who lived in the seat of it, but by many who were free from their temptations. Romanism has long been associated with it, even in external forms. Image worship has a prominent place in its churches, and saint worship in its calendar. In the face of the plain warning and the authoritative command of the second precept of the decalogue, both of these inconsistencies have been defended and practised. Alas! in our own times of light and privilege too, many bearing the Protestant name have discovered more than a readiness to sympathize with Rome in this twofold idolatry. Thus Christian churches have been an offence to both Jews and Mahometans, and one reason urged by them for the

rejection of Christianity has been its connexion with idolatry, which they both condemn and loathe.

These heavy accusations are admitted at once, because they are undeniable facts. But it is not to be inferred that all who unite in either making or owning them, are themselves free from the charge of idol-worship. There is the idolatry of the heart, as well as of the eye and the lip. Many who raise their loud protest against the external idolatry may be living in the spirit of that which is internal. The essence of idolatry consists in giving that place to any other object, which is due to God only. That is the supreme place in the heart and life. Whatever it be to which all else is subordinate, that is to us, God. If it be anything beside God, we are guilty of idolatry. And it may be profitable to notice some of the principal forms in which this sin may be manifested.

There is the idolatry of the creature. This may be a parent or a child, a husband or a wife, a brother or a sister, any earthly relative. There is one practical rule by which it may always be determined whether any one has been betrayed into it. The apostle has well expressed it, saying, "his servants ye are, to whom ye yield yourselves to obey." When the command of God, and the will of the creature cross one another which do we obey? Do we please the creature at the sacrifice of displeasing the Creator? Or do we obey God, offend whom, or injure what it may? The answer to this question determines our true spirit.

Again, there is the idolatry of self. One mark of the un-renewed man, given by the Apostle Paul is, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Some live for fleshly gratifications. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Their appetites reign in them, and them they

will obey. Others seek mental gratifications. They are more refined, and less hurtful to themselves and others than the former, but they are alike guilty. They may study creation, and not see the Creator. They may know the science of the earth and heavens, and not recognize the hand that made them. The mind, or the language, or the body, or the history of man may be their theme, while they consider not either his judge or their own. They look into nature, but not through it to nature's God. All such need to listen to the apostle's warning, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called ; which some professing have erred concerning the faith." This is spiritual idolatry.

Above all, there is the idolatry of the world. Its riches may be sought as the one thing needful, or its pleasures may be pursued with unabated purpose, or its honours may be sought as the chief glory of man. In these and countless other forms the world may occupy the place due only to God. The warnings of the divine word are, therefore, the most urgent. Our Lord has said, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other, ye cannot serve God and mammon." And his beloved disciple has echoed his master's sentiment, saying, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him ; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world ; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The love of the world is incompatible with the love of God. Whenever its service is made paramount to that of God, there its love is proved to reign. It matters not what the form may be. The principle of evil is there. It

is idolatry. And the command of the apostle is seasonable, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

This negative view of the subject, however, is not sufficient. While idolatry is forbidden by the text, the corresponding duty of supreme love to God is demanded. And to complete the subject we must consider what are the duties required by it.

But how are these to be considered in the closing remarks of a discourse? They comprise the whole duty of man. We can therefore only advert to a summary of them.

Their essence, indeed, lies in the intelligent and hearty reception of the words preceding the text: "This is the true God and eternal life." It is to see God in Christ and to receive Him into our hearts, as the object of our supreme love and delight. It is to own Him as "all our salvation and all our desire." It is to say with sincerity, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My heart and flesh doth faint and fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." For suppose this to be our spirit, and what will be the result? It will be as follows.

God will be universally acknowledged. Wherever we are, we shall realize His presence. Whatever we do we shall seek His direction and favour. Whatever befalls us we shall hear His voice. The life will be spent in "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

God will be universally obeyed. The love of His name will urge to the obedience of His commandments. The earnest cry will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Be His requirements what they will, it will be felt "his commandments are not grievous." The love that binds us to himself will make the path of His precepts easy. "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou hast enlarged my heart."

The will of God will be patiently borne. Confidence in Him will reconcile to His dispensations. They may be often dark, and mysterious, and distressing, but it will be felt they are right, and wise, and good. Blessings will be evolved out of them all, and the promise shall be made sure, "All things shall work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."

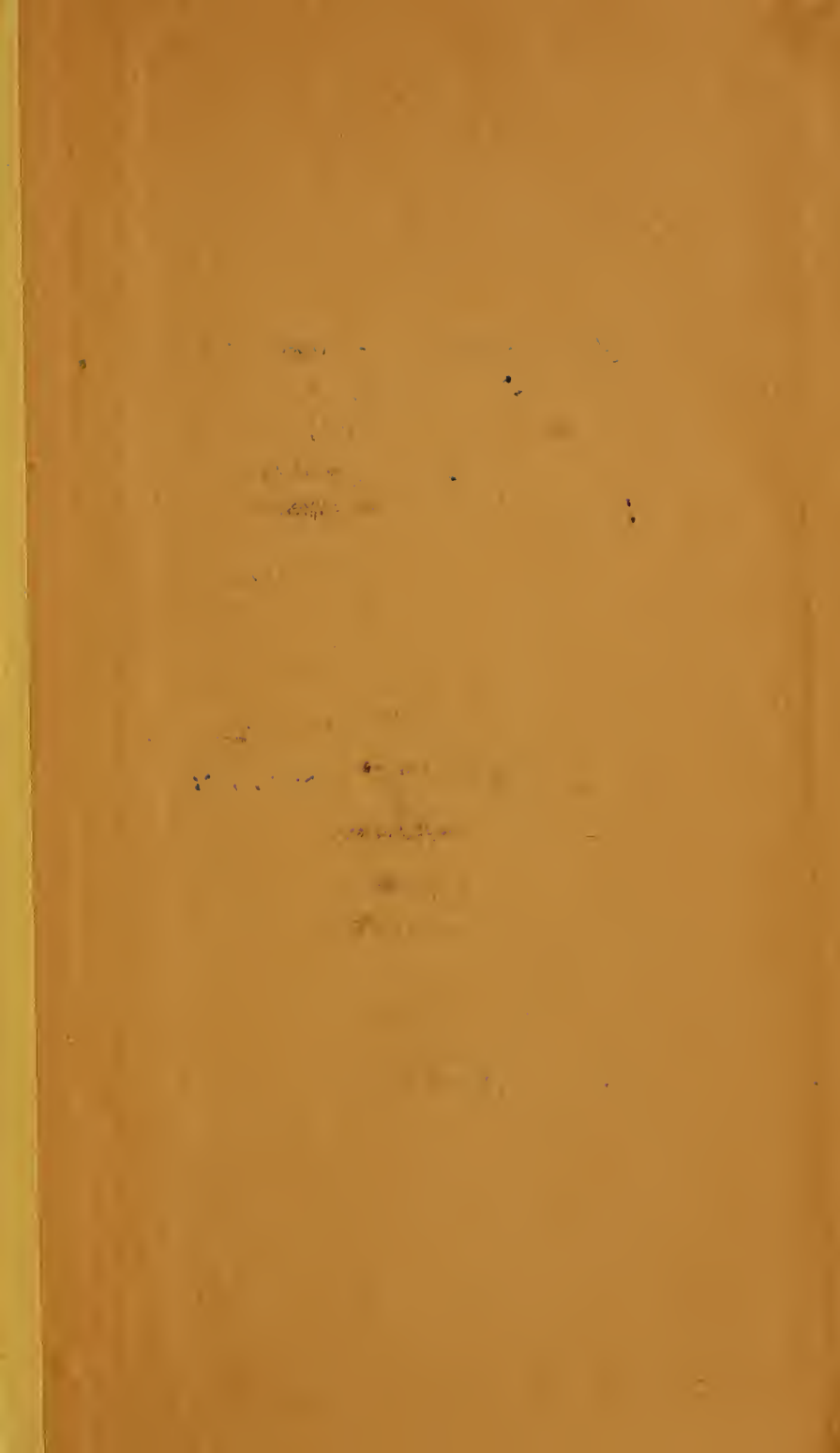
Viewed in the light of the Gospel and its redeeming love, all that appertains to God is endeared to us—His perfections, and character, and law, and government, and people, and creatures, and works. Everything is associated with Him, and we see, and adore, and enjoy Him in all. We are constrained to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

Thus, and only thus, shall the command ever be obeyed, "Keep yourselves from idols." The negative resistance of idolatry will not avail, however dutiful it be; there must be the positive delight in God. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart." It is only as the heart is filled with the love of His name, the obedience that is due to Him shall ever be rendered. The command of Christ contains the true philosophy, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." It is as through the knowledge of Christ and the grace of His Spirit we attain to this habit, we shall have power to obey the commandment of the text, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Amen.

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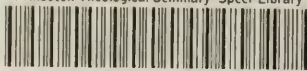




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